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Early English Dramatists

THE SPIDER AND
THE FLY

ALSO AN ATTRIBUTED INTER-
LUDE, ENTITLED

GENTLENESS AND
NOBILITY

By JOHN HEYWOOD

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Early English Dramatists

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The Spider and the Fly

TOGETHER WITH AN ATTRIBUTED INTERLUDE
ENTITLED

Gentleness and Nobility

BY

JOHN HEYWOOD

EDITED BY

JOHN S. FARMER

London

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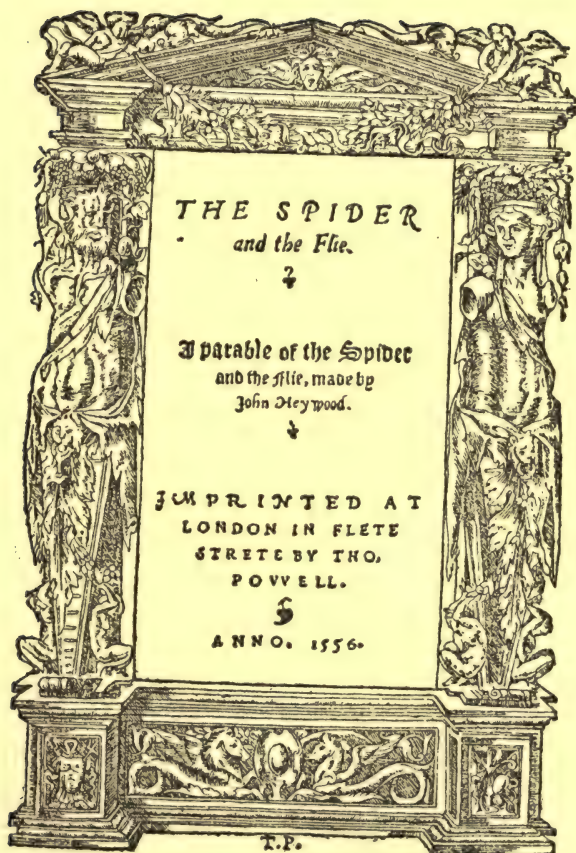
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PREFATORY NOTE

WITH the present volume is completed the text of the first and only collected edition of the known and attributed writings of John Heywood, "the father of English comedy." The glossaries attached to the first two volumes will more than suffice for all reasonable requirements in respect to such matters in the present one. It had, however, been hoped that it would have been possible to include a biographical sketch, together with other points of interest and concern connected with John Heywood, but all reasonable limits of space have already been largely exceeded. Moreover, on other grounds it is wiser to defer such a monograph pending investigations now in progress, but which are proving to have barely commenced. It is a gratifying fact that at length the much-desired materials for an intelligent biography of John Heywood are gradually being collected. New facts are being brought to light; fresh dates are being fixed,

and others hitherto problematical verified; whilst, most important of all, new avenues of research are being opened up and suggested. I hope in due course to publish a volume dealing, to better purpose than has hitherto been possible, with John Heywood's life, times, and writings. Due notice will be given to the subscribers to the Early English Drama Society's edition of Heywood's *Works*.

JOHN S. FARMER.



[Reduced Facsimile of the title-page of "The Spider and the Fly" (ed. 1556), from a copy (C34, s. 11) now in the British Museum.]
HEY. III. B



[Reduced Facsimile of the woodcut portrait of John Heywood, forming a frontispiece to "The Spider and the Fly."]



[THE SPIDER AND THE FLY]

THE PREFACE

[A.ii.r.]



Parable is properly one thing
That of another doth conceiving
bring. [scanned,
Yea (oftentimes) as parables are
One score of things by one be
understand.

Each one of all, scanned and used well,
May teach the scanner good to take and tell.
Contrarily, scanned and used ill,
Like ill likewise the fruit amounteth until.
Wherefore, before entrance to scanning here,
In present parable here to appear,
First to induct (for to conduct) the way,
How readers and scanners readily may
Right scanning (in right reading) here purchase.
[case.

Good readers! read and scan (rightly) this
There chanced at once, at one fair glass to be,
Themselves t'attire at once, fair women three.
Where one another envied till all were dressed,
Who might (when all were dressed) seem
dressed best.

But, in the time of trimming of their gear,
Their foreheads striking up, broiding their hair,
Lacing and laying it, with everything,
Looked in the glass, directing trim trimming.

In all this time these women everyone
 Beheld each other, but themselves not one
 That in the glass upon herself cast eye,
 Good or ill tiring (in herself) t'espied.
 One hair lay low, one other lay too high,
 On this side, or on that side, clean awry.
 But hereupon, when each had other espied,
 In tire attired, all awry or wide,
 Lord ! in all three what inward sport there was,

[A.ii.v.]

Each one to see another in that glass !
 All three sore swelled : but be it best or worst,
 Twain must vent upward straight, or both must
 burst.

While Margaret went aside, her pins to set,
 Marian and Margery back they both get
 To touch th'attire, of Margaret thus worn,
 Between them twain to laugh that third to
 scorn.

Marion said to Margery : See you not
 How Meg is dressed ? Yes, Madge (quoth she)
 God wot

Might not a beetle, blind beast, bring to pass,
 To dress herself as well at any glass ?
 Yes, Madge ; and with one eye I can now see
 What spots (unseen to her) in her face be.
 Yea, Moll (quoth Madge), I think I should ill
 hie me,

To dress myself so ill, the glass so nigh me.
 God hath done his part : she hath a good face,
 Which gift of God herself doth ill disgrace.
 Marion at this stepping from Margery,
 Margaret to Margery stepped by and by.
 And straight of Marion Margaret falleth in
 hand,

How far from frame Marion's attire doth stand,

Madge and Meg finding fault at Marion more
Than Madge and Marion found at Meg before.
The third course was that Madge did start
aside,

Wherewith Marion to Meg hastily hied,
And Margery's attire they set abroach,
As ill or worse (the worse her to reproach),
Than she was tired indeed. Thus all these
three,

Divided thrice in twain, did thrice agree,
Each twain, the third to mock and jest upon,

[A.iii.r.

Till every one had mocked every one.
Each mocking other's fault, they faulty all,
Each mocker's mock most on herself did fall.
This done, one of these three to the glass went,
No face but hers then being represent;
Where, when she did herself only behold,
Her silent sight her fore folly so told
That, marking first herself, herself she attired,
And then the rest, (in their attire) desired
That each upon herself would set sure eye,
Ere she cast eye on other, low or high.
They doing so, all were attiréd so,
That whether apart, or they together go,
Had they been willing, they had been unable
Spark or speck to spy discommendable
Each in other's attire. Which women and
glass

Are a glass this book and readers to compass,
In scanning sense to touch men in this book.
As glass lookers looked, if book readers look,
He upon him, and he on him, to scan
Since most and best, nay most and worst they
can,

Scanning who is the spider, who the fly,

Neither of either to himself t'apply;
 Scanning no whit, by scanning here to see,
 In case spiders, in case flies, all scanned may
 be,

Glass looking and book reading, in such wise
 May well be scanned one like vain exercise.

Who that this parable doth thus define,

This parable thus is his and not mine.

To this, this one thing I must mind you to
 mind,

[A.iii.v.]

Concerning spiders, flies, and eke th'ants' kind.
 Where I their natural operation

With the largest enlarge, t'enlarge foundation

Whereon I frame this top story, here to see

As both, both in length and breadth, may most
 agree,

[and wide.]

This (for this cause) stretched the more long

I pray you bear with me, where it is spied

Wherein my fault may seem somewhat the less,

That wiser men than I (in like process),

Have done the like : and late, one wise and old

In an old book did read (as he me told),

That whensoever spiders, flies, and ants speak,

Their appropriate properties they likewise
 break.

Which if themselves do ye will grant, I hope,

That I (doing it for them) may have like scope.

Thus wishing wishingly, in reading this,

Readers to read and scan all sentences

As we first mark and mend ourselves, and then

To mark, to mend, the faults of other men,

Without more scanning here. I now herein

End circumstance the substance to begin.

FINIS.

[The tail-piece on p. 38 is here given in
 original.]



THE TABLE

[*A. iv. r.*]

THE Introduction to the matter, showing how the fly chanced to fall in the spider's cobweb.

Cap. primu

¶The lamentation of the fly, with declaration (partly) of the property of Fortune, and of his own estate past and present.

Cap. 2.

¶The dreadful wonder of the spider, at sudden shaking of his cobweb.

Cap. 3.

¶The spider, taking comfort, entereth in quarrel with the fly.

Cap. 4.

¶The spider starting into his house to comfort his household, the fly deviseth what way to escape the danger of the spider.

Cap. 5.

¶The spider being returned to the fly, after a few words between them had, the fly sueth to the spider to be heard speak, which he granteth.

Cap. 6.

¶The oration of the fly to the spider, commending justice, and just justicers, requiring to have his cause heard thoroughly and adjudged justly.

Cap. 7.

¶The spider granteth the fly both to hear and adjudge this case, as may most agreeably stand with reason, law, custom, and conscience.

Cap. 8.

¶They stand both in hope to convince each

other by just cause, the fly praying the spider's pardon of such rude speech and all behaviour, as he may chance to overshoot himself in, the which the spider doth grant. *Cap. 9.*

¶They enter into the principal argument. The fly supposing no lawful proof by witness of any ill there against him, the spider allegeth the contrary. The fly (upon occasion), requiring to be bailed under surety, the spider denieth it. *Cap. 10.*

[*A. iv. v.*

¶The spider chargeth the fly, first with burglary, which the fly answereth unto: then the spider chargeth him with single felony, which the fly reasoneth unto. *Cap. 11.*

¶The spider (in a manner) granteth that the fly came into the cobweb against the fly's own will; which the spider so granteth, for such policy forthwith appearing as seemeth to weigh sore against the fly. *Cap. 12.*

¶The fly herewith is abashed, but anon he gathereth himself to a stay, showing a reason that maketh a manifest show clearly to overthrow the spider's foresaid policy. *Cap. 13.*

¶The spider checketh the fly for his comparing above the spider in knowledge of law and custom, which the fly maintaineth by one reason commonly reported. Whereupon the spider, perceiving the policy for which he seemed to grant the fly to come against his will taketh little or no place, that much weakening his part, he driveth the fly to draw back that grant. *Cap. 14.*

¶They reason afresh to try whether the fly came into the spider's cobweb with or against his will. *Cap. 15.*

¶They continue in pursuit of trial whether the fly came thither willingly or unwillingly so far, that the fly at length offereth to take a book oath that he came against his will. *Cap. 16.*

¶The spider not admitting the fly to his oath, the fly bringeth in the strength of the affirmative for his part, against the negative on the spider's side. Whereunto adjoined his other reasons laid in discharge of charge past, he hopeth, according to justice promised, to be straight discharged. *Cap. 17.*

¶The spider, upon a case in law touching the affirmative, taketh hold to detain the fly still in possession, but yet under [*B.i.r.*] promise of justice before promised. *Cap. 18.*

¶The spider, seeing that he cannot take full hold of the fly in case of burglary nor felony, he chargeth him now with trespass, to which the fly reasoneth. *Cap. 19.*

¶The spider (at the fly's answering him to a question) chargeth the fly with procuring of other flies to disturb him in his cobwebs, which the fly denieth. *Cap. 20.*

¶They fall in comparison touching their evidence written or unwritten. Whereunto the fly layeth prescription of custom, which he before (alleged), supposing thereby, that the spider ought both to deliver him and make him amends. *Cap. 21.*

¶The spider denieth the fly's description of custom, alleging the saying of ancient spiders for his interest by custom. Wherein anon both showing each to give small credit to other, the fly moveth to put the matter in arbitrament, which (as yet), the spider doth not grant. *Cap. 21.*

¶The fly (after a few words concerning appeal) doth briefly recapitulate the effect passed in the principal case. *Cap. 23.*

¶The spider putteth a case in appeal ill (in appearance) for the fly, as the spider draweth it, and anon he by example of the lord's will had in courts of copyhold, seeming to lean toward will, the fly laboureth to qualify that will.

Cap. 24.

¶The fly claimeth all holes in all windows to be flies' in freehold, and that spiders should build by the sides or in the tops. Which case to be tried by law or custom, they in manner agree: but the fly moving it to be tried at the common law, the spider refuseth it, whereupon ariseth matter of digression [*B.i.v.*], in which the fly commendeth the spider for expedite hearing hereof, briefly defining the properties of justice, mercy, and tyranny.

Cap. 25.

¶The fly (for cause here appearing) desireth to repeat his distinction of justice, mercy, and tyranny, which the spider denieth. Wherewith the fly layeth to the spider breach of promise made to him before. In discharge whereof, the spider answereth.

Cap. 26.

¶The spider (reducing the fly to the principal matter) moveth the trial to be had in his own lordship, which the fly misliketh. Whereon ensueth a glance at the diversity of government, between one spider and twelve flies.

Cap. 27.

¶They agree to be tried by arbitrament, whether all or how many holes in all windows belong to spiders, and how many to flies, the spider choosing for his part the ant or pismire, the fly choosing for his side the butterfly. Whereupon they, th'one couple in one part, and

th'other couple in another part, talk together
forthwith.

Cap. 28.

¶The spider to the ant, and fly to butterfly
(after words of greeting) declare that they are
chosen their arbiters herein, wherein the ant
and butterfly promise to do their best. And
they then anon draw all four together in (or at)
the cobweb.

Cap. 29.

¶The spider declareth, and the fly granteth the
issue to be, that all flies claim (in freehold) all
holes in all windows to be theirs by custom.
And spiders claim all holes with all parts of all
windows to be their freehold by custom. And
after talk between them therein had, the ant
requireth full instruction of the two parties to
them two arbiters.

Cap. 30.

¶They (in couples separate again) declare each
how he would [*B.ii.r.*] have his arbiter handle
his part. And first is here told the tale of the
spider to the ant.

Cap. 31.

¶The tale of the fly to the butterfly how he
shall use the fly's part. Which done, the ar-
biters withdraw themselves toward the top of
the window.

Cap. 32.

¶The ant and the butterfly met together in the
top of the window, certain spiders on their
one side, and certain flies on their other side.
Th'arbiters command them to stand back while
they two talk together.

Cap. 33.

¶Th'ant declaring the cause of that meeting,
the spiders and flies acknowledging the same,
and that they come to give evidence, the flies
are appointed to depart while the spiders first
show what they can say for their part.

Cap. 34.

¶After a few words between the ant and the
butterfly, one spider, as might be for all, de-

clareth to those two th'arbiters all evidence that all spiders for their part can devise. And that done, the spiders are commanded away, and the flies bidden to approach. *Cap. 35.*

¶Upon a short talk between the arbiters, one fly, spokesfly for all flies, discloseth all evidence for their part. Wherewith the flies at commandment depart aside. *Cap. 36.*

¶The arbiters (in debating th'evidence on both parts given) cannot otherwise agree, but that the same weigheth even as much for the t'one part as for the t'other. At end whereof, they call again all the said sort. *Cap. 37.*

¶The ant showeth to them all that th'evidence weigheth to one effect on both sides, so that all resteth now upon knowledge which part to credit most. And upon that motion, one spider and one fly fall in argument to try the same, wherein is touched (partly) the properties of credence, worship, and honesty, they agreeing that credence standeth upon [*B.ii.v.*] honesty, as thus—as every spider or fly is honest, so is he credible. Which talk ended, they are all again sequestered. *Cap. 38.*

¶By th'ant's provocation the butterfly repeateth th'argument before made in his gross terms, not far from full. And they twain seeming to agree upon the point herein, they command the spiders and flies back again. *Cap. 39.*

¶Th'ant telleth them, that where th'evidence for both sides goeth to one effect, and that in debating which side is most credible to award the window unto, it is concluded that credence standeth upon honesty, and that as all spiders and flies are honest, so are they credible, now must it first be tried which side is most honest,

thereon to judge which side is most credible.

Cap. 40.

¶One spider and one fly reasoning which side is most honest agreeing (in conclusion) that th'onesty on both sides appeareth to them two to be one, that fly requireth the arbiters to ponder the case as they shall think good.

Cap. 41.

¶Th'arbiters commanding all to go apart again, they fall in talking somewhat at large touching both credence and honesty in both these sides. Which done, to show therein their minds, they call all before them again. *Cap. 42.*

¶The ant telleth them that they two determine th'onesty on both sides to be one, willing them to go forth in the matter. Wherewith one tart taunting spider and one sharp saucy fly, forbearing till this time (with much pain) speaking or rather railing, stand now forth (upon tip toes) to chop logic each with other in rude reasoning of this case.

Cap. 43.

¶Where another spider and fly reasoned late before to prove which side of both is most honest, this said quarrelling spider and cocking fly labour to prove which part of both is most [*B.iii.r.*] dishonest in words and deeds, as by usurpation in windows and other misbehaviour. At end whereof infurious fumes, thence runneth the spider one way, and the fly flingeth another.

Cap. 44.

¶After a few words, which the ant speaketh to the rest of both sorts there, they are assigned to stand back again, while th'arbiters gather out of this railing such reasons as they can.

Cap. 45.

¶Th'arbiters consider, in this said taunting talk,

that sundry dishonest abuses there are in sundry parties on both sides. Upon their agreement of conclusion wherein, they have before them those other spiders and flies again.

Cap. 46.

¶Th'ant declareth to those spiders and flies that the tales of the pert spider and fly, before told, do charge each other's part in such sort that they cannot say which side is most dishonest, but they two adjudge clearly, in dishonest things, both sides of like dishonesty. Wherewith they all avoided back again, th'arbiters talk to fall to appoint between themselves what report finally and fully to make. *Cap. 47.* ¶Th'arbiters being agreed on their report, they call to them again the spiders and the flies.

Cap. 48.

¶Th'ant showeth them that the butterfly and he are at point what to report, devising it to be reported before the head spider and the fly in the cobweb, the two principal parties, and to have with them, to hear and witness their report, two spiders and two flies, witty and discreet, and the rest to stay there till their return. Which being agreed, they set forth straight to the said cobweb.

Cap. 49.

¶The ant associate with the said sort pronounceth at length (to the spider and fly in the cobweb) this brief effect:—That inasmuch as on both sides the evidence is one, and that the cre[B.iii.v.]dence is one, by th'onesty being one, they two can (in reason) no way try how to lay th'accustomed right more on th'one side than on th'other, they finally leave the case even at liberty as they found it. And so depart to the place of arbitrament again. *Cap. 50.*

¶Th'ant and butterfly set where they had sit, th'ant repeateth to those spiders and flies the report made by him at the said cobweb. At end whereof, the spiders and flies, seeing that time spent all in vain, each side among themselves fall in murmuring.

Cap. 51.

¶Upon the spiders' and the flies' muttering murmuring, suddenly there come nigh about them a wonderful number of all manner of flies in their warlike manner. Whereat with twink of an eye (as it were) the head spider (with a great number of spiders) hath builded a strong castle in that cobweb, with ordnance and weapons and spiders ready in order of defence.

Cap. 52.

¶This huge heap of flies light about th'arbiters, apprehending th'ant, casting a halter about his neck, drawing him to their tree of reformation (as they call it) to hang him straight. But at his suit to be heard speak ere he die, one fly fleeth into the tree, wherewith the captain commandeth silence.

Cap. 53.

¶The fly in the tree, to persuade the flies to hear the ant speak, wadeth honestly, politically to allure them to quiet hearing of the ant before they put him to death. His which tale told, he removeth to his place again.

Cap. 54.

¶The fly's former fine tale no whit stirreth the gross flies to the hearing of the ant. Whereupon the butterfly (that was an arbiter) fleeth into the tree, labouring the flies to have the ant heard speak ere he die.

Cap. 55. [B.iv.r.]

¶The butterfly (to get th'ant to be heard) telleth his tale in such rude manner and matter that anon he setteth them all (well nigh) together by the ears. But upon his gross tale grossly

told, (much more liked than the fly's finer tale) they grant to hear the ant speak. *Cap. 56.*

¶The ant prayeth to be heard speak thoroughly before any part of his tale be adjudged, and then they to adjudge the whole as standeth with equity, first alleging matter to clear himself from offending the flies, finally giving them (as it seemeth) friendly counsel, (touching this strife) grounded upon this common saying: Before thou ought begin, have an eye to the end. *Cap. 57.*

¶Th'ant hath set the flies in such fear of the spiders, that most are ready to run away; whom to stay, the captain fly deviseth th'ant to set the spiders in like fear of them, by a tale told on the same ground that he told this, in pain of hanging at his return. *Cap. 58.*

¶Th'ant, after entry in talk (before the head spider) he to him, and all the spiders (upon this said ground: Ere thou ought begin, have an eye to the end), inveigheth what he can to set the spiders in fear of the flies. *Cap. 59.*

¶Th'ant, having brought the spiders in great fear of the multitude of flies, the head spider taking great displeasure with the ant for the same, he answereth th'ant's tale so that he bringeth all the spiders in courage again, giving (in his own name and all theirs) defiance to the flies. *Cap. 60.*

¶Upon defiance given by the spider to the flies, the ant, brought again to the flies, maketh full report of all said at the cobweb. At end whereof, two flies argue whether th'ant have deserved life or death by keeping or breaking former commandment to bring the spiders in fear of the flies. *Cap. 61.*

[B.iv.v.]

¶At end of this last argument, the captain asking the ant what he can say why he should not die, the ant, after a few words, submitteth him to their order. Whereupon, the captain going to the question, the ant is condemned by the voice of the most number. The captain then willing him to make his last prayers, he doth so.

Cap. 62.

¶While the ant saith his prayers on the ladder, two flies, thinking him to be wrongfully cast away, pitying the case, they touch (in talk) three sorts of flies seen there then. Wherein is touched some part of properties of neuter flies.

Cap. 63.

¶The ant, having now made his prayers, being at point to be turned from the ladder, a fly, afar off, crieth "Hold." Who (lighting in the tree) bringeth such a message from the head spider, as the ant (thereby) is reprieved, and carried to prison.

Cap. 64.

¶The captain fly inveigheth upon matter before past in such sort so encouraging the flies again, that anon they all crying to the captain to march forward, they bravely set forth, and, laying their ordnance to the cobweb castle, they besiege it round.

Cap. 65.

¶The flies give onset in assault upon the castle, the spiders defending it in furious fight. And upon the slaughter on both sides, the flies retire to their camp, the spider's wife and children on knees to him beseeching him to take peace with the flies.

Cap. 66.

¶The spider, having compassion on his wife and children as on himself, he saith that he will, with the advice of his council, in their suit do all that may be done for the best.

Cap. 67.

¶The spider, set with twelve of his council, declareth his wife's and children's suit (adjoining thereunto considerations of [C.i.r.] his own) for peace to be taken with the flies, requiring those councillors (while he depart and return) to determine what way he shall take.

Cap. 68.

¶Straight as the spider is gone, the rest arise, withdrawing asunder in three plumps, four in a plump, no one knot knowing what the rest saith. Which done, they all set down again against the spider's return.

Cap. 69.

¶The spider, set again with his council, in those three said sorts arise three divers ways to take herein, the best one whereof to choose, the spider departeth to devise upon, willing them to cause all corners of that castle to be cleansed and all battered places made strong again.

Cap. 70.

¶The flies in camp be at council, desirously devising by what means to get peace best. Whereupon the captain inventing a means to drive the ant to sue for peace if they will be ruled by him, they thereunto agree. And thereupon the ant is brought before the flies.

Cap. 71.

¶The captain telleth the ant that the flies have retired from th'assault, (where many spiders are slain) to see whether the spiders will sue for peace, for which since they sue not, the flies will assault them again. But the ant they will hang straight before they go.

Cap. 72.

¶The ant, upon sudden short warning of his death being much dismayed, laying all that he can for his life, and yet can get no grace, he prayeth respite while he be brought to the

spider to see whether he will grow to any peace to save the ant's life. Which granted, the ant is brought before the spider. *Cap. 73.*

¶Th'ant (in way of petition) suing to the spider for peace, laying considerations to provoke him the rather thereto, the spider doth attentively give the ant hearing. *Cap. 74.*

¶The spider (upon th'ant's tale told to him) allegeth certain things by which he seemeth in doubt much to grant peace to the flies. Wherein the ant and he traversing somewhat, anon he granteth peace to them under condition expressed, wherewith th'ant is brought to the flies again. *Cap. 75.*

¶Th'ant declaring peace as it is granted, the flies in much joy set the ant thankfully at liberty, and home goeth he. Whereupon the captain commandeth all flies to draw near to hear him speak ere they depart. But they flee all away, a few except. *Cap. 76.*

¶Upon a little talk had between the captain and the few flies there left, touching the rudeness and lightness of the common sort of flies, misliking their former light lewd demeanour, they depart, the camps, on both sides, clear broken up. *Cap. 77.*

¶Th'ant, being come to the molehill, solemnly received of his wife and children and a great number of ants, he telleth to them all a tale discoursing th'effect of all his trouble had among the spiders and flies, willing them diligently to mark what he saith. *Cap. 78.*

¶Th'ant having said what he will say, willesh all ants to note why he said that he said. Which is to warn them by his harms to be-

ware how they meddle in matters between spiders and flies.

Cap. 79.

¶Four flies (in the name of all flies) at the cobweb, thanking the spider for pardon and peace, declaring the conditions and the performance on their part, sue to the spider on his part, to perform his grant, in laying out and possessing them of their limits with half the holes in the window, which he granteth, bidding them a little time stay, in which while he sendeth the youngest spider of his twain to the ant, praying him to come to him again to divide and [C.ii.r.] deliver the holes to the flies as the spider will appoint them. *Cap. 80.*

¶Upon this message done, th'ant feigneth a let of his coming by a hurt mischancing him that morning, with which answer the young spider returneth to the old.

Cap. 81.

¶The spider, after a few words to the four flies, assigneth to them all the small holes beneath, half the holes in number, but scant the fixed part of the room, at which they somewhat grudge. But they must take them or none.

Cap. 82.

¶The four flies flown thence, the spider to the fly in prison layeth: that in all kinds of trial that day on both parts laid, he thinketh his own part approved best, as he thinketh the fly would think were he a spider, contrary judgment whereof, the fly thinketh in the spider were he a fly. Whereupon they agree to change places (each for the time) to imagine and set forth other's part the best they can.

Cap. 83.

¶They having changed places, they allege each

for his dissembled side. Wherein the fly anon is so allured to pride and ambition in occupying (for the while) the spider's stately place, that he at last with an oath affirmeth that spiders are owners of all windows. The spider granting it true, stateth to the fly, seeming to take end upon the fly's own judgment. *Cap. 84.*

¶The fly out of that chair fallen flat before the spider, perceiving his oversight and danger therein, he declareth how change of place changed his affection. In discoursing of which case, he partly toucheth the commodity of adversity, and the discommodity of prosperity, beseeching the spider to relinquish all advantage therein to be taken against him. Which the spider granteth. *Cap. 85.*

¶The spider, upon a glance given at his desert of thanks to [*C.ii.v.*] be had at the fly's hand, allegeth custom to be his warrant to destroy the fly, which the fly cannot deny. Whereupon he desireth that the case may be reasoned in conscience, which the spider now granteth. *Cap. 86.*

¶They both lay sundry sharp reasons in conscience for the spider's life and death. But the spider in conclusion draweth these four principles (reason, law, custom, and conscience, which he at beginning granteth to try all by) so to combine that he maketh thereby an appearance, to show the fly convinced. And straight by custom he giveth judgment of the fly's death. To which the fly yieldeth, praying to speak with twelve flies before he die. And it is granted. *Cap. 87.*

¶The fly (to twelve grave flies for all flies)

giveth his advice for avoiding the perils by their strife had in windows against spiders, the great ground of which tale standeth most upon consideration of these three things, wherefore they strive, with whom they strive, and how they strive. *Cap. 88.*

¶As the spider is about to kill the fly, the maid of the house cometh in and striketh down the cobweb and the spider to the ground. *Cap. 89.*

¶The maid being at point to tread the spider to death, the spider prayeth her to hear him speak ere he die, and then to adjudge him justly, the maid granting to use him (as he did use the fly) as may best stand with reason, law, custom, and conscience. She at his request (for the time) withdrawing her foot, they fall to reasoning of the case. *Cap. 90.*

¶In reasoning of both sides, the maid driveth the spider to grant himself convinced (by custom aided with the other principles erst said) as he convinced and adjudged the fly before. Whereupon she (by custom) decreeth the spider to die, he then desiring to speak with his son and his counsel, which the maid granteth. *Cap. 91.*

[*C.iii.r.*

¶The spider to his son and twelve spiders giveth his best advice for most quiet and best governance, his tale standing most upon these three terms—first a declaration of himself, second an exhortation to them, the third a submission for himself. Whereunto he desireth licence to take his child in his arms now at their departing, which the maid granteth. *Cap. 92.*

¶After a few woeful words of the spider had to

his son (they both clasping each other in arms very naturally) he kisseth and blesseth him. Wherewith that son with all the twelve spiders dolefully depart from the spider. *Cap. 93.*

¶The maid (appearing as woe to destroy the spider as he is to be destroyed) with her foot presseth him to death. *Cap. 94.*

¶The maid hath before her the twelve spiders and the twelve flies that had been before in place. And upon her show that all harms done by those generations is grown by disorder, she finally deviseth full redress in pointing them to grow to order. *Cap. 95.*

¶The twelve spiders and twelve flies, having heard their order set by the maid, they thankfully receive it. And upon her commandment to them, to put this order in ure among all spiders and flies, they joyfully depart that commandment to fulfil. *Cap. 96.*

¶The spiders and flies being now absent, the maid sweepeth the window clean in every place as far as her broom and arm will stretch, which done she departeth. *Cap. 97.*

¶The maid being gone, the author cometh in. And upon his [*C.iii.v.*] beholding the window fair and clean swept, without any cumbrous cobwebs or excessive flocks of flies, he departeth. *Cap. 98.*

FINIS TABULÆ.

[The tail-piece as on p. 154 is here given in original.]

[On C.iv.r. in the original is repeated the portrait of the author which in the present volume is given on page 2 facing the preface.]



[THE SPIDER AND THE FLY]

*¶The Introduction to the matter, showing how
the fly chanced to fall in the spider's cobweb.*

Cap. primū.



[A.i.r.]



N season what time every growing
thing,

That ripeth by root, hath lively
taken heart,

Grass, leaf, and flower, in field
so flourishing

That wintered withered stalks stand in covert;
Though weary withered hearts play then like
part,

Covertly couched in bed, themselves to hide,
Yet hearts of lust the bed can not abide.

But up they must, proof of that lust to make :

In which like cheerful time it chanced me

From sleep one night so timely to awake

That how far night, or how nigh day might be,

It passed my reach of search sure sign to see ;

But straight the search of nature wrought the
crow

Of dawning of the day, warning to show.

Upon which admonition I arose ;

But by the time that I could get me out,

The day appeareth and so broad breaketh loose,

Leading mine eye at large to look about

The fields so fresh, that be ye out of doubt,

For savour, sight, and hearing each bird's
voice,

No change could chance to choose the better
choice.

Which I (rejoicingly) heard and beheld

Till such time as the sun was come in sight,

So that the dew (drawn by his power) must
yield

[night ;

From th'earth to th'air, from whence it fell that

And having herein had mine appetite,

I made return (temperately to remain)
Out of hot sun to temperate house again.

Whereas (anon) a book I took in hand [A.i.v.
Something to read, to fode forth fantasy,
And stepping to a window, there to stand,
In at a lattice hole, right suddenly,
Even at a fling, fast flew there in a fly
That sang as shrill and freshly in my mind
As any bird could do, bred of that kind.

About the parlour flew this fly full round,
And, as appeared, he sought for food indeed,
But when in no wise aught would there be
found,
Into the buttery (hastily) he yede,
And stole into the almary to feed,
Where he (at pleasure) triumphed uncontrolled,
Till he had there (at will) wrought what he
would.

From whence (anon) courageously he flang
Now here, now there, of wing he made no store,
But for a fly, oh Lord ! how he than sang
Two notes above his highest note before !
Wherein, increased his courage more and more,
He flew, he frisked, he tossed, he turned about,
The fly of flies, no fly, I trow, so stout.

But as the firmament most clear and blue,
The golden sunbeams bent to beautify,
The curtain drawn of cloudy weeping hue
Withdraweth, and changeth that crystal azure
sky
From blue to black, so fareth it with the fly ;
Amid whose joy, at window to have passed,

A cobweb masketh his wings and maketh him
fast.

Thus chance hath (by exchange) the fly so
trapped,

That suddenly he lost his liberty ;
The more he wrang, the faster was he wrapt,
And all to th'increase of his jeopardy ;
Which peril, when he did conceive and see,
Such was his rage in haste from thence to flit
As made him seem well nigh out of his wit.

He wafted his wings, he wagged his tail,
He shook his head, he frowned, he staréd wide,
He spurned, he kicked, but when nought would
avail

To rid him thence, but there he must abide,
As breath and breast would bear, loudly he
cried.

And, woefully as any one fly can,
In following form this woeful fly began.



[A.ii.v.
¶The lamentation of the fly, with declaration
(partly) of the property of Fortune, and of his
own estate past and present. Cap. 2.



[A.iii.r.
ALAS, alas, alas and wellaway !
To cry aloud, alas ! what cause have I !
Alas (I say) that ever I saw this day !
My whole estate, in twinkling of an eye,
Is here transformed from mirth to misery ;
For froward fortune hath led my mishap
To lay and lock me in mine enemy's lap.

Oh sudden sorrow, from settled solace !
For so sat I in solace, as methought.
Oh fortune, false flatterer that ever was
In one moment, and in another wrought
So furious, that both th'effects forth brought,
Fury or flattery, which is worth in thee
Hard for a fly to judge the certainty.

Namely for me, who all my life have been
Lapped in lap of thy fair flattering flowers,
Till from those roses, now thou castest me
clean
Into these nettles of thy furious showers,
Wherein my lack of practice lacketh powers
(My whole time having been spent in the t'one)
To judge in these two, which is the worst one.

I lack (I mean) judgment to judge at full
Both these said sides ; howbeit here to declare
Somewhat in both parts, I both can and will ;
Mine entry now, in change from joy to care,
Hath in this instant taught me to compare
Flattery with fury, truth in both to try,
When Fortune telleth truth, and when Fortune
doth lie.

[A.iii.v.

Who, while she was (or rather seemed) my
friend,
Th'appearance of her pleasant countenance
Promised me my wealth should have none end ;
But swifter than the star doth seem to glance
That assemblance turneth to dissemblance ;
Mine ended wealth, now turned to endless woe,
Amid 'mong her false flattery, proveth so.

And putting now her fury here in ure,
Threatening the danger of my life present,
Performance thereof doth appear as sure
As it in manner had experiment;
Her fury is a glass right excellent
Between fury and flattery to devise
To take her threats true, and her promise lies.

Flattery and fury thus in her this goes—
When she speaketh fair, then hath she lust to
lie; [disclose,
When she speaketh foul, then truth she will
Which thing showeth somewhat strange, but
commonly

In man to man, man's use doth verify,
In love and hate disclosing truth and lies,
The self show showed in daily exercise.

In sundry things experience doth tell
No friend with friend (in friendship) will be
plain,

As foe with foe will in his fury fell.
Love, to tell truth, doth oft for love refrain;
Hate hideth no jot untold for to remain.
Love locketh in truth, lest truth might friends
displease;

Hate lasheth out truth, foes to displease and
disease.

[*A. iv. r.*
Friends (in this case) will hide truth, and show
lies; [truth;

Foes (in this case) will hide lies and show
Of truth that toucheth in displeasing wise
Hate hideth nought that memory endueth;
In man, and fortune, who that fully vieweth
How use of truth and lies herein hath gone,
Shall see in both small difference save this one.

Love causeth friends to hide displeasants truth,
To keep their friends in quiet while they may;
By love in friends to friends, a lothness
grow'th

In thing extreme, the truth extreme to say ;
Where hiding of the truth harmeth no way,
Or that the truth is better hid than told,
There friend to friend by love will truth with-
hold.

But those respects fortune doth nought attend ;
Her hidden truth, in pleasant present show,
Is to beguile such as on her depend,
When from her grace their grief unknown shall
grow

By fore-purposed, following overthrow;
In quiet calm, she shadoweth shipwreck rocks,
To make her mariners her mocking stocks.

And noting here (from her proclaimed calm)
How suddenly her stolen storms do arise
Of joy long sought, late had, the sudden qualm
I judge to be her great joy to devise;
By her which joy, my sorrow in this wise,
Teacheth me (I say) to say that I have said,
And so much more as is next after laid.

[A. iv. v.

What is long liking life, the time once past,
Except the same have been orderly spent?
Th'account'd audit day must come at last,
When word, and deed, with thought of each
intent,
Shall have a just account with like judgment.
Would God, for all which dreadful doubtful
doubts,
That I had died even in my swaddling clouts.

For live we never so long a time here,
 The time determined once that hence must we,
 Then doth all worldly pleasure past appear,
 Even as indeed it is, all vanity;
 Which pleasure hath been long possessed in
 me,

I think in no creature living more
 That ever livéd here, a fly before.

Full many a night have I escapéd harm,
 When many a fly to harm was bought and sold,
 And many a night have I lain close and warm
 When many a fly abroad hath died for cold;
 And many a fly the flap hath jobbed and jolled,
 When I have safely kept from jeopardy,
 Myself and all the flies that followed me.

Whereby (with flies) I was then so esteemed
 That few things passed without my counsel,
 And where I passed there was no danger
 deemed,

Nor no cause why, for in all things that fell
 My work did then approve my wit so well
 That no whit caréd I what fly did know it,
 Nor yet how far or broad all flies did blow it.

[B.i.r.

I have been (ere this day) these many days,
 By mine experience and mother wit,
 Highly in estimation many ways,
 And where I was present, no fly would sit,
 Nor pertly press, to blow or bite one bit
 Till I were set; for where were flesh or fish,
 The choice of both was mine in every dish.

And I suppose as long as present tense
 May keep possessed possession peaceably,
 To stand in place and case of reverence

Is thing much pleasant to all flies well nigh;
But once in changed case as now am I,
The preter tense presently taking place,
Then hath the present tense lost all his grace.

Alas ! my joyful joy of yesterday,
How can it cure my careful care present?
Of pleasure past, remembrance doth alway
The pinch of present pain right much augment;
Then in this present case this consequent,
Concludeth (I say) all pleasure past to be
Nought else but vanished vain vanity.

Thus lieth there now in charge of my reproof,
Those things which I have long time gloried in,
Which glory past, increaseth present grief;
And as my worthy wit did worship win,
So shall show of my folly never blin
To bruit defame, report of his distress
Shall toss and turn my wit to foolishness,

[B. i. v.]

As thus, the simplest fly which by my school
Is taught (ere this) of cobwebs to beware,
And seeth his master play so far the fool
To be myself now tripped in the same snare,
Shall by report my folly full declare,
Which surely shall among all flies survive
As long as any one fly is alive.

And though this fall I take to be as clean
Without my fault, as without remedy,
And patience the medicinable mean
To take all faultless falls rejoicingly,
And eke where no help helpeth malady
To make a virtue of necessity,
Yet those two points are points too high for me.

For be I faulty, or be I faultless,
Since I this dreadful danger must endure,
I am not mortified to bear distress,
And being clear remediless from cure
Of all my pains, that putteth most pain in ure
From step to step stretched on this straining
 stair,
No step like that straineth danger of despair.

For whereas if remedy anywhere,
Hope (out of hand) should set me there about,
As hope of help is drowned, so I forbear
All diligence that hence might help me out;
Thus though the caged bird (with stomach stout
And voice right sweet) can sing his songs by
 rote,
Yet can the fettered fly so sing no note.

[B.ii.r.]

Example of myself, whose weeping eyes,
With sobbing sighing heart bewaileth my pain,
Appearing such, by ought I can surmise,
As doth (in manner) show my death certain;
Namely, if so the spider now remain
In this his mansion, set here presently,
Then dread I, doubtless, here forthwith to die

Of such a death as most abhorreth us flies,
Which flies have felt and folk have seen too
Of property the spider hath the guise [plain;
First to suck out and so eat up our brain
To his small gain and our most loss and pain.
Thus hath it been, thus it is, and thus shall be,
Till pity may mitigate th'extremity.

[The tailpiece as on page 28 is here given in
 the original.]

[B.ii.v.
¶The dreadful wonder of the spider at sudden
shaking of his cobweb. Cap. 3.



[B.iii.r.
WHAT time the fly this to himself had said,
About the house he cast a doleful look,
Wherewith (to break away) he made abraid
With such a thrust that all the cobweb shook;
At which the spider start, and straight awoke
Out of sound sleep, full fast trembling for fear,
And faintly spake (anon) as ye shall hear.

Alas ! where am I ? Alas ! whence came I ?
Or whither shall I ? What's this ? An earth-
quake ?

Or cometh the day of doom now suddenly ?
Nought else (I trow) but that my house could
make

In every place to shatter and to shake.
What is this buzzing blumbering, trow we ?
thunder ?

Hold, house ! alas ! my ceiling riveth asunder.

No part hath rest in all parts of this frame,
From roof to groundsill, within any room.

Is it the devil ? or is it our dame ?

Or is it the page ? or is it the groom ?

Or is it our maid with her birchen broom ?

Between the devil and all these, last and first,

The devil take me if I can choose the worst.

But ill, worse and worst, devil, and all to-
gether

Do me assault as it (to me) doth seem ;

Hath fortune wrought my foes at this time
hither,

And not so much as warned me to misdeem ?

Now fie on fickle fortune thus extreme,

And I defy the guard of such a guider !

Alas (this day) I am but a dead spider.

[*B.iii.v.*

These words thus spoken, down anon he sank,

Kneeling awhile devoutly on his knee,

And then, round on a heap, to ground he
shrank,

Like an urchin under an apple tree ;

No felon, fast in fetters for his fee,

Nor ape in chain, that ever looked more pale

Than looked this spider, after this told tale.

So that these twain stand now in one estate,
For in like languor both be now here led,
And of their lives both like desperate;
For now the spider is as far in dread,
And by that dread he is even as near dead,
As is the fly, who thinketh he seeth at eye
His death approaching him apparently.



[*B.iv.r.*
¶The spider, taking comfort, entereth in
quarrel with the fly. Cap. 4.



[*B.iv.v.*
Howbeit, anon the spider well espied
That enemies were there none save only one,
And him he saw so safe and surely tied,
That up he stood to stretch him, and anon
(His former fear from him now being gone)
To the top of his cobweb he stept boldly,
And in these words began to common coldly.

Who are you that lieth there? speak, if you
can?

Forsooth (said then the fly), sir, it is I.
I? be you I? (quoth he) I pray you then
What I be you? tell me that by and by.
What I am I? forsooth, sir, a poor fly.
What! thou false thief, art thou here? quoth
the spider,
Thou shalt feel cause to wish thou hadst gone
wider.

And therewithal full furiously he flang
Toward the fly, but what time he espied him,
Oh lord! how his feat feet and hands he
wrang,
Beseeching his great God that day to guide him,
And from his mortal enemy to divide him:
Without whose aid, from which his foe to flit,
He saw it past a fly's poor power and wit.

And his dreadful despair was much the more
To see how speedily the spider span
All round about his house each side to shore;
No weaving workman in this world that can
Weave that like web of that like stuff woven
than.

In each weak place is woven a weaving cast,
Byward, inward, toward the fly more fast.

[C.i.r.]

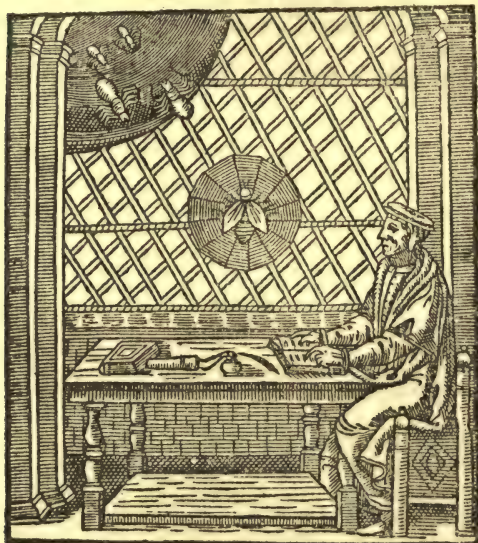
Which done, these words the spider sourly said,
Thou ancient enemy and arrant thief,
Whose lineage always hath showed banner
'splayed

Against my parentage, to their great grief;
And now thyself, renewing their mischief
With malice of thine own in ure to put,
Art stolen into my house, my throat to cut.

And never had my house and household harm
By any fly, so much as now by thee.
I shrew thy naked heart ! I was full warm,
Naked abed, asleep so mote I thee.
Thereas my wife and all my children be ;
Where God knoweth what they do, or how they
do, [to.
By fear which thou at this time bringest them



[C.i.v.
¶The spider starting into his house to comfort
his household, the fly deviseth what way to
escape the danger of the spider. Cap. 5.



[C.ii.r.
AND with these words aside the spider
start [were,
Where his said bedfellow and offspring
Saying these words : Now, good my own sweet-
heart,
And my two babes, be ye all of good cheer.
The present cause of all your present fear
Is past; I have the caitiff fast in snare
That was the cause of all your fearful care.

What whoreson is it, husband? (Quoth he)

Wife,

A flesh fly as big as a humble bee,
That shall (if I live) surely lose his life.
The youngest spider there, at this cried he,
Oh, father, father, I heartily pray ye,
Remember when ye shall return again
To bring me some part of that flesh fly's brain.

How say ye to this babe? (quoth the mother)

Will ye hear this urchin of eight weeks old?

It is a babbling brat above all other.

Yea (quoth the father), child, hardly be bold.

Thorns prick young that shall be sharp, folk
have told;

Which showeth in thee, in that thou art inclined
To crave (thus young) according to thy kind.

And while the spider dallied in this wise,

The fly (considering this extremity)

Did with himself advisedly devise,

To 'scape with life, what might his best means
be;

Softly, as I might hear, saying, I see

Like as much contention can nought prevail,

So to much cowardice might all quail.

[C.ii.v.]

Between these two, cowardice and contention,

The spider's ire the rather to assuage,

I temperately must temper mine invention,

To plead my right in reason, not in rage.

And since my body lieth in jail for gage,

My jailor fair and gently to beseech;

That is (in flies) no flattery but fair speech.

From desperate fear hope maketh me now sup-
pose,
If I may obtain hearing reasonably,
I neither life nor liberty shall lose,
But be let loose from bondage by and by.
And hereupon the spider, suddenly
From where he was, returnéd back again,
And straight to gripe the fly began to strain,



[C.iii.r.
¶The spider being returned to the fly, after a few words between them had, the fly sueth to the spider to be heard speak, which he granteth.
Cap. 6.



[C.iii.v
THE fly (to him) lift up both heart and hands,
And, in most mild behaviour humbly,
Said : Sir, since I am bound here in your bands,
Under commandment thus assuredly,
What bruit might breed to you more infamy
Than here (in hucker mucker) me to murder,
The cause wherefore I die published no further.

Fly (quoth the spider), I dare say the cause
 Is open enough, for a thousand mark
 Will not repair that which, against all laws,
 Thou hast here broken. Behold thine own
 work,

Wherein to answer all that at me bark,
 To whom thy doleful death shall be apparent;
 To them thy devilish deed shall be my warrant.

Sir (said the fly), if it indeed so be
 That this my deed apparently appear
 So far my fault that it may warrant ye
 To give me death therefore with conscious
 clear;

Then as my body is in prison here,
 So with my body yield my will, will I,
 Unto your will, at will to live or die.

But, sir, before we shall be so far forth,
 I you beseech right humbly as I may,
 Allow my suit for such and so much worth,
 To win your grant (ere I be cast away)
 To hear what I can in this matter say.
 So thou with speed show what thou hast to
 break,

I (quoth the spider) grant to hear thee speak.

[*C. iv. r.*
 I thank you humbly (quoth the fly), but, sir,
 Of a goose with garlick sauced so late I eat,
 That my breath stinketh, and since I may not
 stir

From you, for you I think it very meet
 To step from me aloof to air more sweet.
 The spider stepping back a little way,
 The fly therewith (somewhat lightened) did say.

[*The tailpiece as on page 44 is here given in
 the original.*]

[C.iv.v.
¶The oration of the fly to the spider, commend-
ing justice, and just justicers, requiring to have
his cause heard thoroughly and adjudged
justly. Cap. 7.



[D.i.v.
MASTER spider, note (I beseech you)
this :
Ye know right well the virtue of justice
In every creature here living is,
Both in you spiders, and eke in us flies,
And in every other wight being wise,
The thing which is generally pretended,
And, where it is in deed, highly commended :

And where that virtue lacketh in any wight,
 All other virtues there do bid adieu;
 What virtue can (in place) take place of right,
 In such as to show justice to eschew?
 Who lacketh justice, he cannot be true;
 And who in judging all things, justly judgeth,
 To choose that judge his judge, no wise wight
 grudgeth.

Great lets wherein are four—love, hate, meed,
 and dread,

In all which judgments given, adjudging gains,
 Love judgeth the loved more than justice
 showeth decreed,

Hate judgeth the hated less than justice con-
 strains:

Meed judgeth the meeder more than justice
 contains,

Dread, in dread of the dreaded the dreader
 drives [trives.

To judge, more or less, as the dreaded con-

And t'avoid partial judgment between parties,
 Though th'one party for judge, I wish none of
 them,

Yet change of mind or matter doth oft so rise,
 That the judge is judge and party one of them;
 As you seem judge here, being the tone of
 them,

Self love in which judge, he th'other part
 hating, [rating:

May judge much judgment of much unjust
 [D.i.v.

Yea, though the judge hate th'other party no
 deal, [enough,

That self judge, himself loving more than
 Less right than enough, th'other part may soon
 feel;

Self love, to himself tender, to the rest tough,
Is of just justice neither root, branch, nor
bough.

Love (namely self love) corruptibly growing,
Is chief lodestar of lets in justice showing.

For though corrupt love and hate, contraries
mere, [linked,
Work one like wrong, both in one like degree
Yet that love worse than that hate I adjudge
here;

It is more hard love to ourselves to extinct,
Than hate to other to pluck from the heart's
precinct;

Thus of justice no let leadeth interruption,
Like this love (named self love) grown of cor-
ruption.

But to the point: judges that justice use
In all, between themselves and all the rest,
To claim or hold by will who doth refuse
Things whereof they would be or be possessed;
And even as justice justly hath addressed,
Both give and take the due extended rate,
Those are (for judgment) worthy most estate.

Since justice that sweet flower full fair doth
grow

In persons such as of most base sort be,
That flower more fair and sweet must needly
show

In those that stand above the mean degree,
Being thereto knit unto authority;
As more or less who may command at will,
So more or less he may do good or ill.

[D.ii.r.]

And in our case, were just justice clean reject,
What injuries might thereby here arise!
Of flies' facts, if spiders' wills weighed,
th'effect

Right soon might wilful will, without justice,
Draw unto death a hundred thousand flies,
Which will may do (if will shall knit the knot)
Whether that we flies offend or offend not.

Howbeit, I hope ye will do justice, such
As may with this just justice join justly;
In mine account your wisdom is too much
To blot or blur your fame for any fly;
Whereby I stand in trust assuredly
Just judgment in this matter now to have,
And other thing than that I do none crave.

Save that this case may be first fully heard,
And fully perceived by reasoning likewise,
Which done, as equity best afterward
Shall you advise my judgment to devise,
Without further appeal in enterprise,
I shall (as I say) either to live or die,
Into your hands yield me contentedly.



[D.ii.v.

¶The spider granteth the fly both to hear and
adjudge this case, as may most agreeably stand
with Reason, Law, Custom, and Conscience.

Cap. 8.



[D.iii.r.

FLY (quoth the spider) I espy right well
Thy brain is much, which I right much set
by,

By which thy present suit, the truth to tell,
Thou showest here wittily and honestly,
Request wherein showeth such conveniency,
Full hearing and reasoning to win me to,
That reason biddeth me grant, and so I do.

And for the rest, behold me now (quoth he);
Wherewith his feet to his mouth he tosses,
Saying these words: Now, fly, here unto thee
I swear a solemn oath, by all these crosses,
Thou shalt have justice, though I sustain
losses,

As reasonably may stand, for thy defence,
[In reason, law, custom, and conscience.

In compass of which four principles touched,
All debates discoursed and discussed should
be;

Reason, to perceive man's great ground is
vouched;

Law on reason must take ground to agree;

Custom standeth (or should) on reason's de-
cree; [draw

Conscience with reason concurrerth to with-
Th'extremities of custom and of law.

Upon these four, each one one corner post,
The stinting of debate taketh standing stay,
Whereon this building shall be so embossed,
That, as I sware, again I swear, I say,
Without corruption on my part, this day,
Thou shalt be used herein at my hand
As most with reason and this rest may stand.

[D.iii.v.

¶They stand both in hope to convince each other by just cause, the fly praying the spider's pardon of such rude speech, and all behaviour as he may chance to overshoot himself in, the which the spider doth grant.

Cap. 9.



[D.iv.r.

THERE never was friar limiter that
 ducked
 So low, where begging won him twenty
 cheeses,
 As is the fly now to the spider rucked;

He maketh him sure to win, whoever leses;
 And here withal (by chance) the spider sneezes.
 Now (quoth the fly) chance I to win or lese,
 Christ help, and long in health well mote ye
 sneeze.

The spider herefore gave the fly such thank
 As hath in usage, course of courtesy;
 But note these twain, so lately so like blank
 And both now in like mirth immediately;
 Methought that chanced very prettily;
 The fly thinketh reason shall sure make his
 way;

The spider thinketh in reason surely nay.

Sir (quoth the fly), I must you here beseech
 To ratify your pardon my protection
 In my behaviour, namely in such speech
 As may (by rudeness) rightly crave correction;
 If I shall lack your aid to this election
 Then may my reasoning for my liberty
 Lose my liberty, and win my jeopardy.

This is included, fly, in my sworn oath
 By which I erst have promised thee justice;
 Such speech as in thy case directly goeth,
 So that thou rail not too far out of size,
 For which thou seemest a fly as far too wise,
 Spare not to speak thy mind, and unto me
 (So said) say what thou wilt: I pardon thee.

[D. iv. v.]

That pardon I receive with hearty heart,
 And heartily thank your granting of the same;
 The shell now of this nut shelled clear apart,
 The cracking of this nut, to put in frame,
 For winning of the kernel of this game,
 To your pardon had, your patience praying,
 To hear for further searching, further saying.

Here stood they both, awhile in silent stay,
The fly devising warily what to speak;
The spider likewise warily watched at bay
What great words out of his mouth, small and
weak,
Of challenge to defence should there then
break.
Wherewith at courtesy, low and reverent,
From circumstance to substance the fly went.



[E.i.r.]

¶ They enter into the principal argument, the fly supposing no lawful proof by witness of any ill there against him, the spider allegeth the contrary. The fly (upon occasion) requiring to be bailed under surety, the spider denieth it.

Cap. 10.



[E.i.v.]

MASTER spider, the pith now to advance,
 I pray you declare plainly (quoth the fly),
 How can (by law) in reason this mischance
 Support in you—to keep me cruelly
 To lie in prison here thus piteously,
 And with your fetters fettering me thus fast,
 No lawful proof of cause by witness past?

No lawful proof? (quoth he) fly, sayst thou so?
 What proof can reason show in law more clear
 Than sight of him that one inch cannot go
 From present place, where plainly doth appear
 Such an act done as thou hast now done here?
 I think the falsest fly of all thy kin
 Would judge for heinous thy thus breaking in.

But put the case, that I attachéd you,
 In this my lordship, fast in jail to sit
 But as suspect, no act approvéd now,
 Yet might I keep ye fast, lest ye might flit,
 Till ye were found guilty, or else acquit,
 Except this case run right, and law runneth
 wrong,
 For this is law, and law it hath been long.

Keep (quoth the fly) I pray you, in suspense
 The first allegéd case of these last twain,
 Till in this last law lay experience;
 Whereby it may appear ye may detain
 A fly suspect of crime, not provéd plain; (
 But under surety, out of common jail,
 The prisoner shall at suit be let to bail.

Let flies to bail? friend fly (quoth the spider)
 Nay, by my father's soul, that will not be,
 Except he here will be such a bider
 That he will sit fast by the feet for thee
 And take thy turn: him will I take surety.
 Nay (quoth the fly) that trieth a friend too
 much;
 I have good friends, but sure I have none such.

To bind a fly herein, body for body,
Were bond sufficient for a thing thus slight.
Well (quoth the spider) fly, call thou me noddy
Except I prove this a thing of much weight.
But thou alluredst me in way of receipt
Of one fly here, now fastened fast in jail,
To go lay salt on another fly's tail.



[E.ii.v.
¶The spider chargeth the fly, first with burglary, which the fly answereth unto; then the spider chargeth him with single felony, which the fly reasoneth unto. Cap. 11.



[E.iii.r.
THIS reason driveth us now (quoth the fly)
Straight to your reason, before suspended,
Wherein mine act, appearing evidently
So huge, and heinous offence commenced,
As by that reason it is pretenced,
Then law and reason both will that I fail,
Of light surety, to borrow me to bail.

But in mine act apparently committed,
Although the deed I no whit do deny,
Yet how can law, by any wight well witted,
Lay in my fault offensive fact thereby?
Fly (quoth the spider) that can (and will) I,
And thy reproach, to broach forthwith at large,
I lay (in law) burglary to thy charge.

That charge is soon discharged, sir, said he;
The breach of houses in the time of night
Showeth evidence where those offenders be.
But not only the sun doth shine full bright
Ere flies a mornings come abroad in sight,
But also at eve, ere the sun be set,
Each fly to his lodging again will get.

By this, this breach can be no burglary,
And ere I now came here all men might see
The sun appearing universally.
Though it (at thy coming) were day with thee,
Yet was it night (quoth the spider) with me;
I was asleep, and no day yet had seen
These two long hours, had not this mischance
been.

[E.iii.v.]

Sir (quoth the fly) admit that ye now were
Asleep, till that the sun were six hours high,
Could any reason show reason to bear
You to affirm, or firmly verify,
The day for night, till time ye day espy?
So were it a thing easy to be done,
With a wink, to make it midnight at noon.

Why, fly, at noon? midnight is it with me
If I at noon be asleep. Yea (quoth the fly)
But if ye against one noon-sleeper shall see
Ten thousand noon-wakers, night from noon to
try,

Ye shall poorly prove this night noon burglary.
And slept ye till noon, yet in course of the sun,
Ye are not ignorant how the day doth run.

Well said (said the spider) and put the case,
That I in this case yield thee the mastery;
Yet shall this other case (I trow) take place.
I here arrest thee, fly, of felony,
Which cause of arrest thou canst not deny;
For breaking in here thus, and never knock,
As good or better, were to pick the lock.

I brake into this house now (quoth the fly)
Like as a thief doth break into Newgate,
Saving that the thief doth most commonly
Pretend at his entry there more estate;
For break a thief in there, early or late,
He hath as many leaders as a bride,
With waiters, attendant on every side.

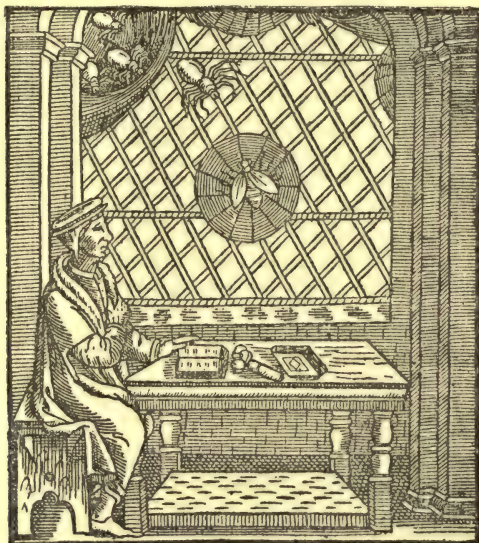
[*E. iv. r.*

And yet no thief is there of all the rout
That into that house breaketh so willingly,
But he would rather go ten mile about
To shun the vanity of vain glory,
Then be received so honourably,
Accounting his life no day the shorter
In taking pain to be his own porter.

And as the thief, full far against his will,
Doth break in there, so break I now in here,
For thief or fly, what one hath wit so ill
To press to rob where he hath knowledge clear
By robbery to steal ought, nought can appear?
Nor no commodity there consequent
But death or perpetual prisonment.

[*The tailpiece as on page 28 is here given in
the original.*]

[E.ii.v.
¶The spider (in a manner) granteth that the fly
came into the cobweb against the fly's own will,
which the spider so granteth, for such policy
forthwith appearing as seemeth to weigh sore
against the fly. Cap. 12.]



[F.i.v.
So mote I thee, good fellow fly (said he)
That allegation reacheth here, so far and near,
That in appearance it concludeth me.
For, glad or willingly, who would come where
As he should clearly know his coming were
An evident and undoubted induction
To his infallible fall of destruction;—

Whereby it seemeth I can no way avoid
Thy coming here to be against thy will.
But now the fly so far is overjoyed,
That by no manner mean he can sit still.
He stretched, and fet a hem right sharp and
shrill.

Whereat the spider smirk and smoothly smiled,
To see the silly fly so far beguiled.

And yet showed the semblance of falsity,
So as it might appear that he did smile
(For joy) upon the fly's behalf, that he
So wittily wound out of this exile,
Which set the fly in glory for the while.
In sight whereof, the spider's pleasure had,
From laughing look to lowering look full sad.

These words he sourly said, Though I now
yield,

Granting that thou cam'st here unwillingly,
Yet shall the fly (at one stroke) lose the field,
In all the rest hereof immediately
Even with the same weapon thou wonnest this
by;

As thus, by the danger that flies here find,
Thou provest to come hither against thy mind.

[*F.i.v.*

This well excuseth thy coming hither,
But (quoth the spider) for thy going hence,
When we have scanned these words together,
Thy reason is hardly worth forty pence.
It is a perfect proof in evidence
For my part, and includeth brief conclusion,
Of condemnation, to thy confusion.

For though thy coming, were against thy will,
What hope to help thee hence doth that imply,
Since death here had or imprisonment still
Is all thy proof, thy so coming to try?
Now (quoth the spider) speak out, good man
fly,
This verdict thus given by your own consent,
Who can blame me thereon to give judgment?



[F.ii.r.
¶The fly herewith is abashed, but anon he
gathereth himself to a stay showing a reason,
that maketh a manifest show clearly to over-
throw the spider's foresaid policy. Cap. 13.



[F.ii.v.
THE fly at this set such a piercing sigh
As made the heart in his poor carcass
quake,
And clapt his hand so hard upon his thigh
That of that cobweb every part did shake;
And time it was for him, now to awake;
HEY. III. p

Such a choking check to a fly in cloister,
A mean wit may deem it was a choking oyster.

The spider yielding to the fly's fore saying,
Was a cast beyond the fly's expectation.
Whereon the fly, spying the spider's inveighing,
Thus far against the fly in approbation,
He seemed to take great discontentation
With himself, to see his own words give state
To the spider to give him this blind mate.

Howbeit anon stay in himself he took,
Saying these words, both with good heart and
wit :

Good master spider, if ye rightly look
In all yet past, all knots between us knit,
Judgment with justice shall fear me no whit.
Fly (quoth the spider) tell me that tale soon ;
We have well begun, but nothing nigh done.

And yet even now for all thy bragging boast,
T'account this case, if we now condescend,
The payment of th'account will be thy cost ;
For though thou burglary do here defend,
And felony, that doth hereon depend,
Yet for my purpose thine own confession
Hath peaceably put me in possession.

[F.iii.r.]

What though thou didst unwillingly this deed,
Yet thyself confessing, as thou doest here,
Death or dealy prisonment to proceed,
What helpeth, I say, thy proof to stand clear,
Since notwithstanding though that proof ap-
pear,

Thyself hast confessed here thyself to be
Dead, or dead prisoner at least, with me.

Indeed, sir (said the fly) even as ye say,
Except my words for my now hither coming,
May have exposition some other way
Than it seemeth they shall have, after your
 summing,
Better for me were to exercise mumming,
Than that my speech should show me such an
 elf
To make mine own words condemn mine own
 self.

But since my reason, joined with your consent,
Approveth my coming here against my will,
By foreknown death (I say) or prisonment,
Then is my reason to the point not ill;
For as ye have granted, and must grant still,
Discharge me (at full) it doeth and must do,
Of burglary and felony, both two.

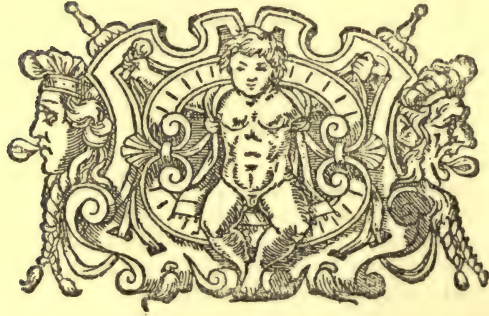
And thus this one reason of mine (ye see)
Answereth all your reasons (save one) whereby
Ye lay to me that I acknowledge me
(In manner) by agreement here to die,
Or, till I die, here in prison to lie;
But once mine answer to those words spoken,
If Justice hold, this prison is broken.

[F.iii.v.]

For though I acknowledge to know before
Such danger, as witnesseth my confession,
Yet lieth the right or the wrong still in store,
The which must try, whether your possession,
Of me here be lawful, or oppression;
But have I known perils here never so long,
Doth that knowledge prove you to do no wrong.

If that were true, every thief might say,
In place whereas robberies accustomed were,
That he might by custom rob there alway,
Because custom avoucheth that thieves rob
there.

I see this example offendeth your ear,
And so it may; for it proveth by proof clear
That I am imprisoned wrongfully here.



[F.iv.r.

¶The spider checketh the fly, for his comparing
above the spider in knowledge of law and cus-
tom, which the fly maintaineth by one reason
commonly reported. Whereupon the spider
perceiving the policy, for which he seemed to
grant the fly to come against his will, taketh
little or no place, that much weakening his part,
he driveth the fly to draw back that grant.

Cap. 14.



[F.iv.v.

THIS is a good brag, fly (quoth the spider)
To set in the forefront of thy battle,
And a meet reason, for an outrider,

That would, by facing, his enemies expel;
And be ye sure it doth wonderfully well
To see a fly think himself presumptuously
Better seen in law and custom than I.

Forsooth (quoth the fly) no displeasure taken,
My learning of reason ought to pass yours,
In Westminster Hall I am not forsaken,
But may be a termor all times and hours;
And that in appearance passeth your powers;
For, as common report may be a proof,
There never com'th cobweb in that hall roof.

The buzzing being in Westminster Hall
Of a flesh fly, every man may forbear
As well as my presence. And sure I shall
Prove it as hard for thee to get out here,
As thou would'st prove for me to get in there:
And ere we depart, I shall turn that journey
From personal appearance to attorney.

And which of our learnings also is best
Shall come to trial when we come to end,
And my replication as yet shall rest
Unto your answer, by which ye pretend
To prove me, by extortion, to offend,
Wherein in effect ye say that I lay
No reason of right, your body to stay.

[G.i.r.]

In which, what matter I have to allege,
By reason, conscience, custom and law,
Not only to keep you here as in pledge,
But also your body to death to draw,
That cor'sive would cursedly your stomach
gnav.

Howbeit, for an ease to your panting heart,
I shall (for a season) set that apart.

And partly peruse, by way of retreat,
Some part of this matter granted before.
Nay sir (quoth the fly) that were but a let;
Let us here retreat, or repeat no more,
Till time that judgment do try our whole store.
By Gis, fly, thou speaketh like a fool (quoth he)
The sooner we take end, the worse for thee.

But I perceive thou wouldst pass over this,
Thereby to win all between us yet passed,
Wherein I grant thine advantage grown is,
By mean of my granting in over much haste
That thou art here against thy will now placed;
Which grant I granted to make thine own
ground
Prove thee in prison here rightfully bound.

And yet my words in this grant, thoroughly
weighed,
Weigh not this absolutely granted to be.
To thy words for coming against thy will laid,
I said they (in appearance) concluded me,
And that as it seemed I must grant it to thee;
Which words import not full power to be able
To bind this thus granted irrevocable.

[G.i.v.
But since thou hast found this feat starting hole
To hide thy head in, thus promptly provided,
I will yet once again quicken this cole,
Whether will or not will thee hither guided.
Why sir (quoth the fly), then am I derided.
Not a whit (quoth the spider), be content;
An old tale misreckoning is no payment.

And if thou think it an hindrance to thee
This part of process to call back again,
When thou canst take like advantage of me,
I grant thee like liberty to obtain.
Agreed (quoth the fly) for when he saw plain
The spider thus bent determinately,
He thought it folly him to contrary.



[G.ii.7.
¶They reason afresh, to try whether the fly
came into the spider's cobweb against his will
or not. Cap. 15.



[G.ii.v.
F LY (quoth the spider) go we to the pith.
Thou sayest thou camst hither against thy
will,
And thy only reason to prove it with
Is foreknowledge of death, or this, as ill,
Perpetual prisoner here to lie still;
Concluding as no wight were so unwise
Willingly to come where known perils arise.

Contrary whereof is seen every day,
In seeing daily that thieves every one,
Committing robberies in any highway,
Do know assuredly, twenty to one,
If they be had, they shall hang thereupon;
And yet if they totter twenty together,
Still do thieves rob there; now who leadeth
them thither?

That do themselves (quoth the fly) and cause
why,
Each thief thinketh to escape thence, as hath
escaped mo.
Think they so? (said he) then why may not I
Think that thou thoughtest likewise from hence
to go?
Nay, sir (quoth the fly) I could not think so;
Never was there fly in this net, thus masked,
That ever escaped, as far as I have asked.

Well fly (quoth he), if thou this part wilt save,
Answer well these questions that follow here.
Hast thou had free will, as other flies have?
Yea, sir. Is not (quoth he) thine eyesight
clear?
Yes, sir. Did ever frenzy in thee appear?
Nay, sir. Be thy wings good and each other
limb?
Yea, sir. And all thy body lusty and trim?

Yea, sir. Then (quoth the spider) it should
seem [G.iii.r.
Thou art thine own leader? Yea (quoth the
fly).
Did any wight (quoth he) use means extreme

To bring thee? None that I can verify.
Did I send for thee? Nay, sir, verily.
And yet thou art here, art thou not, quoth he?
Yes, sir, against my will, I assure ye.

Well then (quoth the spider) thou grantest to
 have had
Free will, and that thou hast good sight of eye,
Lusty limbs to lead thee, and never wast mad,
Compelled to come, as who say forcibly,
Or to be sent for, thyself dost deny;
And yet thorough facing, thou fainest here
To come now hither, against thy will clear.

Which the false demeanour, consider who will,
Doth well approve thee a crafty kind thief,
Lying and stealing, will together still.
Oh (quoth the fly) this augmenteth my grief,
Thus to be charged with desertless reproof!
I am a true fly, sure I can no false knacks;
Alas, master spider, ye be too capax!

As by this example may well be tried.
Put case free will, and your limbs led you now
To pass some narrow bridge by some highway's
 side,
And in that passage should chance (God save
 you)
To slip into the ditch, and break your brow,
Or else (in a good hour be it spoken)
Ye were in peril your neck to be broken :—

[G.iii.v.
And that while ye were in that ditch scrawling,
And scratching in the mire to save your life,
The lord of that soil would in that falling

Attach you of theft, and then would be rife
To charge you, as ye charge me in this strife,
Against your will ye were not thither brought,
But your will itself brought yourself unsought.

How would ye answer this, sir? (quoth the fly)
I would (quoth the spider) say that my will
Led me not to fall in, but to pass by.
What if that saying liked him so ill
That he would say he might call ye thief still,
In that for your passing, under or over,
Ye were of your will let in neither nother?

Then were I driven (quoth the spider) to move
Some part of the difference between these three,
Will, power, and chance, wherein I might soon
 prove
That although my will be never so free,
Yet in active things will cannot bring me
To accomplish those acts, for power or chance
Must join with will, ere outward act advance.

For would I never so willingly will
To wear Paul's steeple for a turkey hat,
Yet since I might indeed eat a horse-mill
As soon as have power so to prank with that,
That will were as wise as will of a wat;
My will may will freely this to obtain,
But will above power, thus wild, is in vain.

[*G.iv.r.*]

Will without power, as in things actual,
Can work nought, and where power and will
 both be,
Chance doth right oft both power and will
 appal;

Above power and against will, oft we see
 That, contrary to powers and will's decree,
 Chance chanceth so, as when by power and will
 We are pressed forth, chance charmeth us to
 stand still.

Example hereof let us here now make
 By the said bridge and ditch, that you erst laid,
 At which, though power and will would under-
 take
 To bring me over, chance might see me stayed,
 And both from power and will so far conveyed
 In going over that bridge, that chance's trip
 Might pop me into that ditch even at a whip.



[G.iv.v.
¶They continue in pursuit of trial, whether the fly came thither willingly or unwillingly, so far, that the fly (at length) offereth to take a book oath that he came against his will. Cap. 16.



[H.i.r.
THIS is unanswerable (quoth the fly)
And a reason for my part worth a pike,
As chance against will might make you there
lie,
Why might not chance even as well in case like
Lay me in this cobweb, as you in that dike?
Fly (quoth the spider) thou art not asked
Whether chance so might, but whether chance
so did.

What (quoth the fly) if this man did purpose?
That question to you, I could (quoth he) well
Make apparent proof, on my part disclose,
That into that ditch chance did me compel.
For nought is there to steal, but apparel,
And all men know I nought desire nor need
Those staring garments of mire and green
weed.

In faith (quoth the fly) and I love as ill
To be in these russets at Whitsuntide;
I wear your grey garment with as ill will
As ye would the green at the ditch's side.
Wherefore this reason is as well applied
For my delivery out of this place,
As for yours (God save you) were ye in case.

Yea (quoth the spider) but our two cases
Be as unlike, as our grey and our green;
Ditches be common and open places,
Wherein to spiders and all folk is seen
That neither now is, nor never hath been,
For spiders in ditches, ought to desire
By stealth, gift, borrowing, buying or hire.

[H.i.v.]

But what commodity here is for thee
That is to thee and to all the world hidden?
This house is too close, thou seest, in to see,
And also all flies that herein have slidden
They have (as thou sayest) so long here abid-
den,
That by return of any messenger
Tidings from hence (I know) thou couldst none
hear.

Wherefore although thou find nought here indeed,
[better.

Yet I think thou thoughtest sure to have found
Sir, though ye think I thought better to speed,
Shall thinking lead you, without word or letter,
To cast me away thus, the proof no greater?
Remember (quoth he), and began to tremble,
The peril of your soul, if ye dissemble.

For by the way that my soul shall go too
I came hither against my will unfeigned,
Which clearly declareth I thought to do
No robbery here, but fain would have refrained
Any part of this house to have constrained.
Which to be true (quoth the fly) if ye look
To have me sworn, I will swear on a book.



[H.ii.r.
¶The spider not admitting the fly to his oath,
the fly bringeth in the strength of the affirmative
for his part against the negative on the
spider's side. Whereunto adjoined his other
reasons laid in discharge of charge past, he
hopeth, according to Justice promised, to be
straight discharged. Cap. 17.



[H.ii.v.
WHY hast thou (quoth he) thou unhappy
hook,
No conscience to be a perjured wretch?
That oath (quoth he) by the way that God took,
HEY. III. G

Should of my conscience neither make breach,
Nor yet any part of my conscience stretch.
Well (quoth the spider) yet would I be loth,
In this case, to trust a fly by an oath.

Sir, mine affirmance in th'affirmative,
In law and reason, is much more credible
Than your denial in the negative;
Your nay, to my yea, must needs be fallible.
And in case present, it is impossible
To approve your part; for how can it be
That you the secrets of my breast can see?

It is as certain that you know them not
As it is certain they are known to me.
Then if I swear that chance me hither got
Against my will, were it reason if ye
Swear the contrary, believed should be
As well as myself, when truth can appear
To none but myself, as appeareth clear?

I make myself sure, yourself thinketh not so:
Which considered, let us now consider
Some part of this past ere we further go,
Wherein proof proveth my coming hither
To be against my will altogether.
Which square shall square me, a scantling well
bent
For a right rule, to show me innocent.

[H.iii.r.]
And in the ears of all that ought can skill
Shall discharge me in all that hath been said,
Or can be laid coming against my will,
How can burglary against me be weighed,
And in this felony what can be said?
Thanking my truth I may here truly say
This wisp hath wiped all this work away.

That wisp of yours (quoth the spider) sheweth
want

Of cleanly scouring, when all cometh together.
Proof of your tale, I take it very scant
To make me take your present coming hither
To be against your will, for how or whither
Could ye thus come, but ye might soon deny
To come with will, as long as ye can lie?

Though I can lie, that is yet no trial
That I have lied, in which, sir (quoth the fly),
Only except stiff or stern denial,
Ye can allege no reason to bide by,
Wherein I have alleged approbately.
Your nay, against my yea, can in this case
By no reasonable mean rightly take place.

Now since this part we have not only brought,
To yea and nay, and that mine affirmance
Hath fully brought your negative to nought,
So that the same, by grounded sure substance,
Dischargeth (in effect) this chargéd chance,
Performed promise of justice, I trist,
Shall from this court now seem straight dismissed.

[H.iii.v.
¶The spider upon a case in law touching th'affirmative, taketh hold to detain the fly still in possession, but yet under promise of justice before promised. Cap. 18.



[H.iv.v.
WOULD ye trudge in post haste, fly? nay,
not so;
Ye may report in me small courtesy
Except I make ye drink once ere ye go.
I thank you (quoth the fly) but verily
I will not drink, for I am now not dry.
Though ye will not tarry to drink (quoth he)
Yet must ye tarry of necessity.

Put case your allegations match with mine,
And further set your yea above my nay,
Yet will I not permute nor yet resign
Possession of your body here this day
For your affirmative which ye do lay
Against my negative; for without witness
Th'affirmative doth no title dispossess.

Thus, though possession fully not suffice
To be a bar against your affirmatives,
Yet bringeth possession clause of warrantise,
By which I here may keep you in these gyves
(You lacking witness) some part of our lives.
But (quoth the spider) truth, truly to tell,
Thou hast (for a fly) said exceeding well.

Concerning coming here against thy will,
Whereon (as yet) our matter all doth stay,
Both parts appear of so pure perfect skill
That we have brought each other to the bay,
I thee to yea, and thou me to nay;
And as in law thy yea seemeth to seem greater,
Than doth my nay, which sheweth thy part the
better.

[H. iv. v.]

For that ye once by witness well approved
That thou against thy will dost here appear,
Then hast thou won the whole (as yet) here
moved,

Approving thyself clearly to stand clear
Of burglary and felony laid here.
For by what mean can any wight make preef
That any wight without will is a thief?

But forasmuch as that point is not yet
Lawfully provéd, I intend to keep
Thee in possession, awhile here to sit,

The Spider and the Fly, Cap. 18

Till we this matter weigh somewhat more deep.
Nay, feare not, fly, thou are unwise to weep,
For I will not all only not destroy thee,
(Unrightfully) but further not annoy thee.

Nor of or on give judgment any way,
Till time thyself (if thou reasonable be)
Shalt see that I may justly do and say,
By justice erst promised unto thee,
All that shall be said or done here by me.
Which justice shall prove me so just a judge,
That thou, nor no fly, shall have cause to
grudge.



[I.i.v.
¶The spider, seeing that he cannot take full
hold of the fly in case of burglary nor felony,
he chargeth him now with trespass, to which
the fly reasoneth. Cap. 19.



[I.i.v.
HEREUNTO, for entry toward an end,
Admit for time thou cam'st against thy
mind,

Declaring thy defence, well to defend
Burglary and felony of each kind;
Yet thou nor no fly is so beetle blind
But thou and they apparently may see
That at the least thou hast trespasséd me.

I say and thou dost see, a thousand mark,
Frameth not this frame, as it framed ere this
fill;

Were it then meet in such a piece of work
I cry you mercy, I thought you none ill?
Or else, I came hither against my will,
Should be full restitution for the act,
Without a more amends made in compact.

In case it is, and in case it is not,
As by example (quoth the fly) put case
That in some highway it should be my lot
To drive a cart, in some one such a place,
As from that way's side, within little space
There were standing a house on a fair green,
And I, perceiving that way much more clean

Than the highway, straight to that way I coast,
And as I drive, the said house to pass by,
My cart wheel catcheth hold of the corner post
Against my will, and by violency
Asunder crusheth it, to which haply
The rest of that house is so bent and bound,
That in default thereof, all falleth to the
ground,

In this case, master spider (quoth the fly) [I.ii.v.]
Chance the chance by day, or chance it by
night,
And chance it never so unwillingly,
Yet law and lawful reason showeth it right
That recompense punish mine oversight;
Law maintaineth no man, with or against will,
To do an act so to any man's ill.

But now put case, that within this highway
This house were set, whereas my cart should
go,
Which did so crush the same that there it lay;
For houses in highways encroaching so,
Cast I down one house, or a thousand more,
There am I bound by reason nor by law,
To recompense the value of a straw?

Weigheth not the law (fly) these cases for such,
As both in the t'one case and in the t'other,
The owner's hurt to be fully as much
In one of these cases, as in another?
His hurt is (quoth the fly) in th'one and
th'other
Hurtful alike, for be he lief or loath,
Down cometh his house, in either case of both.

But the doing differeth, for the first fact
I did against the law, as law doth tell,
And every wight is charged with every act
Of his own doing at his own peril.
Whereby the law provideth very well,
Driving my cart, by adventure at large,
The hurt in th'adventure I must discharge.

[I.ii.v
But in this last fact the fault (quoth the fly)
Is wholly turned unto the sufferer's side,
For himself did an act unlawfully
His house to set up there, which deed so tried
Myself and eke my cart, law doth provide
Harmless to save, for, sir, the law is strong,
In taking such hurts, for hurts without wrong.

And in this last case (quoth the fly) stand we,
In all this hurt here done I do no wrong,
But all the hurt ye have, is (ye may see)
By your wrong doing on yourself along.
What can you spiders show yourselves among,
By any kind of law, what way ye may
Lawfully build within this my highway?



[I.iii.v.
¶The spider (at the fly's answering him to a question) chargeth the fly with procuring of other flies to disturb him in his cobwebs, which the fly denieth. Cap. 20.



[I.iii.v
T HY highway (fly)? art thou lord of this soil?
A poor lord, sir, but if truth may be found,
I stand in case to defend this spoil.
What is thy name (quoth the spider) speak round?
Buz (quoth the fly) with curtsey to the ground.
That name of Buz (quoth the spider) doth show thee,
Even for a ringleader to make me know thee.

Of all the flies that herein have been stayed,
Never was there one in my conscience
But the first word that ever he hath said
Was buz, which is apparent evidence
That all flies have thee in great reverence,
Thinking the policy or power of thee
Shall set them all from hence at liberty.

Whereby I may (and do) take occasion,
To think that thou hast been the fool procurer
Of every fly that hath made invasion
Into my house, and such a lewd allurer
Ought by good reason to be kept much surer
Than forty flies, such as thou hast beforne
Enticed hither, and then laughed them to scorn.

Sir (quoth the fly) truth is my true record,
I am guiltless of this suspected blame;
I have enticed, in earnest nor in bourd,
Any fly hither, nor it is no game
One fly to mock at another's harm or shame,
Nor by enticement to bring a fly where
As the enticer doth stick, to come there.

[I.iv.r.]

And though (as I said) I can prove it such
That this highway is mine for free passage,
And that every fly hath right here as much,
Yet was I never so set in dotage
To set any fly (by indiscreet courage)
To put possession of his right in ure,
To his destruction and your displeasure.

If ye can prove that ever I provoked
Any fly hither, by word or writing,
Or by sign of purpose, craftily cloaked,

To possession here any fly erighting,
Then, without more words by mouth or endit-
ing,
In our whole case much doubtful how to try,
I yield myself condemned undoubtedly.



[I.iv.v.]

¶ They fall in comparison touching their evi-
dence written or unwritten, whereunto the fly
layeth prescription of custom, (which he before
alleged) supposing thereby that the spider ought
both to deliver him, and make him amends.

Cap. 21.



[K.i.v.]

WELL (quoth the spider) though this sus-
picion
Were clearly cleared, yet hast thyself clear
Brought in another of worse condition.

As thus : thy claim to have thy highway here
 Bringeth thee suspected a thief to appear ;
 This is th'old use alway ; all the world knows
 True men in at doors, thieves in at windows.

Master spider, harp no more on that string ;
 I come the same way that your mastership
 doth ;

There is small melody in that harping,
 Conferring precedents with present sooth,
 Changeth oft the barking tongue to biting
 tooth.

Bark or bite who will, fly, I dare abide
 To see title present by precedent tried.

Sir, so dare I then, and shall be well able
 To void your suspicion and prove my guise
 Not only lawful, but thereto laudable.
 What evidence have you contrarywise,
 But gnats, bees, wasps, hornets, and all we
 flies,

At crevice, and windows, with bag and bag-
 gage,

Have had egress to regress by old usage?

This weigheth as (who say) there's none evi-
 dence

Showeth contrary, but this way thine may be,
 Which is no proof for thy part worth twopence,
 So might I claim everything that I see
 Which were in writing not forbidden me ;
 But it is not enough not to be denied,
 For titles must specially be specified.

[K.i.v.

Sir (quoeth the fly) specialties in writing
 Specially to specify yours and mine,
 Should we be driven to show such enditing,

That would (I fear) blank both our parts in fine.
Our chief evidence that we can assign
For proof or disproof, by any decrees,
Standeth in virtue of unwritten verities.

Fly, this tale weigheth not a fly tail (quoth he)
Canst thou show aught of proof or disproof
clear

By written or unwritten words to see
But that our possession shall clear appear
As ancient as thy succession here?
Sir (quoth the fly) I stick not to agree
Ye have been possessed here as long as we.

And long might be; for by the god of might
I never knew fly but was with the same
Heartily content, as far as by right
Your own ground might bear, to enlarge your
frame.

But to be plain, this is the thing we blame—
That ye thus of will, without our consent,
Usurp on us by mean of encroachment.

Good honest flies a thousand that I know
Will say and swear it was th'accustomed guise
That spiders builded in every window
In the top, or by the sides in such wise
As the rest of the lattice for all flies,
By common known custom, when we would set,
Stood free at liberty from any let.

[K.i.i.r.]

But this is building of another size
How may any fly this way easily get
By any way that his wit can devise.
Here is a frame in such a fashion set,
As all were fish that might come to the net.
So far this lattice is overcovered
I marvel yourself will see it suffered.

The case of the cart in law laid ere this
(Custom adjoined) this way mine own to try,
Avoucheth for me that you have done amiss
To encroach or usurp unlawfully
In my highway; then of reason think I
Ye ought in law, custom, and conscience,
Both let me pass and make me recompense. |



[K.ii.v.]

¶The spider denyeth the fly's description of custom, alleging the saying of ancient spiders for his interest by custom. Wherein anon, both showing each to give small credit to other, the fly moveth to put the matter in arbitrament, which (as yet) the spider doth not grant.

Cap. 22.



[K.iii.r.]

LAW and custom, those twain of thy laid
 three
 (Namely law) somewhat reasoned here have
 been,
 But of conscience (save that name named we)

No word was touched since we did first begin.
Time cometh not yet to bring conscience in
Of law and custom ; to ease rigor's force
Conscience at last course procureth remorse.

But thy cart case, and all cases last laid
In charge of trespass thy part to defend,
May be determined (for ought here yet weighed)
As they on law and custom do depend,
Which thou dost allege, with me to contend.
But thy description of prescription here
In our accustomed rights, I deny clear.

Fly, I can bring forth spiders true and old,
More worshipful than thou canst bring forth
flies,

To swear that to them their forefathers told,
Time far beyond mind, custom's exercise
Approved us to build in as large size
As I have builded here, and in thy plat
Ten or twelve holes, to creep in and out at.

Touching custom, th'oath of ten thousand flies
Can (by way of witness) bring nought to ease
In flies' credence to spiders, there doth rise
No difference in oath the worth of a pease
Between a thousand flies and a thousand fleas.
Nay fly (quoth he) and shook him by the neb,
There shall no fly's oaths 'minish this cobweb.

[K.iii.v.

Where ye (quoth the fly) think flies partial,
For witness herein, that challenge may be
In spiders and flies in this case equal.
Since spiders be parties as well as we,
Why should not we fear partiality,
As much in you as you think it in us,
And trust you as little, this standing thus?

But reason (said the spider) ye so do,
Then can this trespass not be tried this way?
We are at yea and nay again both two,
For you no credence give to that I say,
And I as little credit that you lay,
Naught granting each to other, but denial:
How can we twain determine then this trial?

If (quoth the spider) I would condescend
To build in corners at thine assignment,
And straight let thee pass, we were straight at
end.

So were we (quoth the fly) were I content,
At your only word, my life to relent.
Of which two ways, if the tone nor the tother
Be reasonable, let us look out another.

What way (fly) by thy faith, canst thou espy
That may seem meet to make us twain agree?
If I be the deviser (quoth the fly)
Then shall you choose one, whom it pleaseth ye,
And I another whom it pleaseth me;
And as they two award upon the whole
We two to bide: happy man, happy dole.

[K.iv.r.]

So might I haply be happy (quoth he)
But I could not be both happy and wise.
This proverb proveth this a fool's decree,
A thing assured to hazard at the dice,
It bought and had, to buy at a new price,
Or bring a certainty for any saying,
To an uncertainty by doubtful daying.

All things considered in this time and place,
What were my wit to put this thing in ure?
What could I win by that cast in this case,

And what couldst thou here lose since thou art
sure,
At will, in my hand to die or endure?
The worst of this way were hurtless to thee,
And the best of this way fruitless to me.



[K. iv. v.
¶The fly (after a few words concerning appeal)
doth briefly recapitulate th'effect passed in the
principal case. Cap. 23.



[L. i. v.
SIR, if ye consider nothing but winning,
No doubt (quoth the fly) it is so indeed.
But by your promise made me at beginning
Of justice here, I hope no haste of speed
For greedy getting shall make ye proceed
Contrary thereto, in hope of which dealing
I did at beginning revoke appealing.

But if your dealing deal dole otherwise,
Contrarying justice erst granted here,
My revocation of appeal likewise
I will revoke, and as things now appear,
I must revoke that revocation clear,
Or else that justice here, although ye would,
Cannot (according to your promise) hold.

For so is now this matter brought about
That it to judge neither can you nor I;
We both be parties so partial that this doubt
Must be discussed and judged indifferently
By folk indifferent, which if ye deny
In such form as I have here erst devised,
Than by the justice which ye erst promised,

I claim the common law, where, I am sure
To save me safe from harm, that law hath
ground.

For if your evidence be put in ure,
That is so slight, I shall be guiltless found.
And being silent, if no witness found,
Then, this bondage of prison to discharge,
Proclamation straight shall set me at large.

[L.i.v.]

Nay, sir, ye must pay your fees ere ye go.
But goeth my part, fly, in thine opinion
No near unto the pith? Forsooth, sir, no.
Your case in law is not worth an inion.
Well fly (quoth he) since thou art a minion
Of so large learning, I pray thee teach me
Some lesson in this tale to believe thee.

That lesson showeth here not so far behind
In lack of learning as of remembrance,
For if it like you here to call to mind

By brief recital the very substance
Argued (as yet) between us in this chance,
I doubt not in the same yourself to see
Cause in my former words to credit me.

As thus : ye remember our matter past
Yourself hath divided into parts three,
Burglary, felony, and trespass last.
And first for burglary ye saw, and must see,
That flies by nature no night thieves can be;
And though we could, yet might yourself in
sight

Witness with me to come now by daylight.

And unto this, touching the second charge,
Which chargeth me with single felony,
I am assured you searching at large,
Remembering my coming unwillingly,
Shall well perceive my pure innocency;
In talk whereof the truth must make us say,
That we at length were driven to yea and nay.
[L.ii.r.]

Wherein I prove that mine affirmative
Your negative so clearly doth confute,
That I dare say any jury alive
(You letting not the case fall to nonsuit,
But stand to trial, in that we dispute)
Shall (upon hearing what this month until)
Give verdict with coming against my will.

And thirdly, in trespass you charging me
With the hurt of your house, I nothing doubt
The cart case shall make jury and judge see
This trespass on my side clean scraped out,
And this debate at end so brought about
That in this lattice law shall well approve
The holes all mine, and you to build above.

Now since of us twain no one can be judge,
Because we be both extreme partial parties,
I wonder what cause doth cause you to grudge
At the arbitrament that I devise.
In these three said cases there can arise,
In your recovery by the common law,
None advantage to the value of a straw.



[L.ii.v.
¶The spider putteth a case in appeal, ill (in
appearance) for the fly, as the spider draweth
it. And anon he by example of the lord's will
had in courts of copyhold, seeming to lean to-
ward will, the fly laboureth to qualify that will.

Cap. 24.



[L.iii.v.
T HOU shalt (quoth the spider) in this
strife all
Answer thyself by thy answering me
To one question which now demand I shall.

My fellow fly, I put this case to thee,
That this same day at London chanced to be
Some man committing such a heinous deed
That death (by law in London) should proceed.
The which deed, being at Louvain committed,
Law (there) for that deed no death doth provide.
The faultier herein, so wilely witted,
To save his life appealeth to be reprove
From London to Louvain, there to be tried.
Were it, fly (quoth he) reason in this case
That this man's appeal should take any place?
I think, sir (quoth the fly) it were no reason
To grant request of such appeal in case
Of crimes deserving death at any season.
But th'offender, being taken in place
Where he did the deed, to stand to the grace
Of lawful law in that precinct present.
Which, so judging him, I take just judgment.

Quoth the spider, God have mercie on thee!
Amen (quoth the fly) but why speak you that?
I speak (and pray) it even of charity.
Never was there yet any lark or wat,
Before hawk or dog, flatter dared or squat
Than by this answer all thy matter is.
Thou hast condemned thyself, now, in all this.

[L.iii.v.]

How so? (quoth the fly). Thus (quoth the spider)

Thou grantest, where faulters do an enterprise,

Which worthy death the law doth consider,
Th'enterpriser shall appeal in no wise,
But take such chance as by law there doth rise.
Adieu arbitrament and nisi prius!
Instead of twelve or twain one shall now try us.

What one shall that be? Myself, quoth he.
Thy deed done here, hath, by law here, death
 sure,
Alonely to be tried at will of me.
At mine erst suit, (said the fly) here in ure,
Ye promised justice to be so pure
That, with or against me, ye would nought do,
But as myself in reason must 'gree to.

Wherein we being coming toward the point,
In performance of promise, to see trial,
Now is just justice so jotted out of joint,
That ye here unjustly stand at denial
To do me justice, and would by power royal
Direct mine acquital or condemnation,
Even as will in both weigheth your acceptation.

Fly, dost thou weigh my will herein thus light?
In every petty court of copyhold,
All grants that pass, passing in their most
 might,
Pass to hold at lord's will, and so enrolled.
Sir (quoth the fly) copyholders of old
Hold to them and theirs at will of the lord,
As with custom of the manor doth accord.

[*L.iv.r.*

But this term custom standeth not here idle;
Custom (in many cases) seemeth to me
To tenants a buckler, to lords a bridle.
From trespassing wherein if tenants see
(On their parts) customs kept as they should
 be,
The will of the lord most wilfully bent,
Win the nought worth a bent, by custom's extent.

Were this window your manor in freehold,
And flies here your copyholders known clear,
And that I, being your tenant, ye would
Lay in me breach of custom to appear.
Yet should not your only will be judge here;
For as th'omage (upon their oath) present,
So custom bindeth the lord's will in judgment.

Fly, thinkest thou this case a buckler for thee?
This case to our case (quoth the fly) being
scanned,

Is neither sword to you nor buckler to me.
With sword and buckler we may go or stand
Between both cases and touch neither hand.
This case to lords and tenants is concurrent;
But you are not my lord, nor I your tenant.



[L.iv.v.]

¶The fly claimeth all holes in all windows to be flies' in freehold, and that spiders should build by the sides or in the tops. Which case to be tried by law or custom, they in manner agree. But the fly moving it to be tried at the common law, the spider refuseth it. Whereupon ariseth matter of digression, in which the fly commendeth the spider for expedite hearing hereof, briefly defining the property of justice, mercy, and tyranny. Cap. 25.



[M.i.r.]

I TAKE not myself appointed to patise,
As you will set limits and bounds far or near,
But clearly I claim all holes in all lattices

To be flies' freehold, as may right well appear
Where I described when I prescribed here
Your ancestors building the sides and the top,
As flies at liberty in and out might chop.

And as law and custom, or the t'one of them,
Shall judge this point wherein standeth much
part of all,

To that will I stand, refusing none of them,
Standing with your pleasure this case so stand
shall.

Then quoth the spider, Take custom, let law
fall;

Law can little say herein; law must refer
The judgment to custom, to make or mar.

For true trying of custom, Sir (quoth the fly)
The law (please it you) may try how custom
weigheth.

What law, fly? The common law, sir, think I.
Where shall we try, fly, what that law herein
saith?

In Westminster Hall, sir. Why, fly, by thy
faith,

Wouldst thou place this case whereon hangeth
the sum

Where (thou sayest) I nor no spider may come?

How far art thou from th'equity toward me,
That thou desirest in me toward thee to grow?
Thou wouldst bring forth a thousand flies for
thee,

Where no one spider for me may make show,
And so by stealth wouldst win mine overthrow.
The law is one ground of four (quoth the fly),
Which your former grant granteth to try all
by.

[M.i.v.]

And though custom (as who say) in respect
Of trial in this case is itself law,
Yet (I say) law, for form in pleading direct,
Appearance of that trial for thee to draw
Is meet to be had I grant thee that, daw;
But not without this, that we both do agree
The pleading to be where both present may be.

It is meet (quoth the fly) and by you well
weighed,
(Urgent cause except) where matter shall pro-
ceed

Against any person or persons laid,
That he or they answer presently in deed.
And in greatest crimes, this hath greatest need;
For in crimes most criminal that law is pain
The charged party shall no counsel obtain.

Which showeth that law in most need, least
help t'allow,
Whereto if the party be kept in absence,
So that he nor no man for him may avow
Any word in plea pleaded for his defence.
This law is somewhat sore, in my conscience.
Though fair tales in mine ear paint this a fair
case,
Yet in mine eye this case hath a crabbed face.

Since ye deny me not law, but ye deny
To plead this plea where ye present may not be,
Of that denial appeareth so good cause why,
That I shall not only most gladly agree
To have it pleaded where we both shall decree,
But also I rejoice that yourself espieth
This gall in this case, and what ill therein lieth.

[M.ii.7.

One other joy (with many sorrows) I have.
The cause whereof, commendeth you unspeak-
ably.

In less time (in manner) than myself could
crave,

After I am brought here in prison to lie,
It standeth with your pleasure most charitably
To hear, yea, and determine out of hand
How my case standeth, and whereto myself
shall stand.

Oh (master spider) the self deeds done in this
Commend you more than may pen or tongue of
man,

Th'attached of suspicion or fact amiss,
Inquiry at full had, quickly as ye can,
As justice judgeth, straight to dispatch him
than,

Not letting him lie till his limbs rot or lame;
Justice and mercy both concur in the same.

Fly (quoth the spider) favour is not all lost
Showed unto thee, for thou canst consider it.
But many other flies there be in the coast,
In having like favour, the Devil speed the whit,
They do ponder it; wherefore it is not fit,
When chance or desert flies into prison strike
To use froward and flexible flies alike,

Justice (quoth the fly) weigheth what, and why
to do,

Not to whom to do, by favour, meed, or frey;
The man is not the mark that justice shooteth
to,

The man's matter justice shooteth at alway.
 Between God and the devil justice doth display
 His banner indifferently, yielding each part,
 In all due duties, the very due desert.

[M.ii.v.

Mercy, joined with justice, doth either remit
 Or qualify pains that due by justice seem,
 Tyranny not with justice, but against it,
 Not weighing desert, awardeth pains most extreme.

Tyranny and mercy thus may we here deem,—
 Tyranny, not with but against justice showeth;
 Mercy, with and not against justice groweth.

Justice place I here in the midst, as who say
 Mercy on the right hand of justice to stand,
 Tyranny on the left hand; now if we sway
 From the straight line of justice to either hand,
 That sway must needs bring our swaying to be
 scanned,

As we may appear to sway apparently
 Either toward mercy or toward tyranny.

But in leaning to any hand of these twain
 From sole justice when we incline to decline,
 As commonwealth in this case may us maintain,

From corrupt construction this case to define,
 I wish that we, each as our callings assign,
 May lean to that hand with meet strength or
 vigour

That mercy leaneth unto rather than rigour.

[The tailpiece as on page 38 is here given in
 the original.]

[M.iii.r.
¶The fly (for cause here appearing) desireth to repeat his distinction of justice, mercy, and tyranny, which the spider denieth. Wherewith the fly layeth to the spider breach of a promise made to him before in discharge, whereof the spider answereth. Cap. 26.



[M.iii.v.
THE spider hung down both his head and his lip,
Like one that had nought, or wist nought, what to speak.
Wherewith thought the fly,—I have given him a nip;

These distinctions have showed his part so
weak,
That studying for matter he findeth none to
break.

But where he thought the spider in study deep,
He was deceived : the spider was asleep.

And herewith starting awake, Fy, sloth, quoth
he,

I had forgot myself ; I heard myself rout.
Nay, sir (quoth the fly) ye had forgotten me ;
The best part (for my part) ye have slept quite
out.

Nay, not all, fly ; for I put thee out of doubt
Of all thy words had in my commendation,
I heard every word and can make relation.

But thine entry : to matter more serious
Brought me asleep ; but I pray thee heartily,
What's the point of that case so imperious ?
The pith is the distinction, quoth the fly,
Between justice, mercy, and tyranny.
Which since you heard not, and it much meet
to hear,

I shall repeat to you in form brief and clear.

That would (quoth the spider) make me sleep
again,

And physick forbideth me to sleep twice a day ;
Repetition hereof I deny thee plain.

Reason, law, custom, and conscience, ye say.
Shall (quoth the fly) all our present matter
weigh.

But touching reason, law, custom, and con-
science, [since.

Two of those four principles are gone even

Which two (quoth the spider?) These two
(quoth the fly)

Reason and conscience. As how, fly (quoth
he?)

As thus, quoth the fly. Ye retreated lately
And revoked a case which ye had granted me,
Touching coming here against my will to be.
At which when I grudged ye made me promise
To have in the like case liberty likewise.

And now when I would (not revoke) but repeat
This piece for my part, ye plainly that deny.
What reason or conscience is here to get?
Good reason and good conscience, fellow fly.
But since reason is sufficient this to try,
Let conscience (I say) stay till the last instant,
Lest narrow conscience reason's wide scope
might scant.

And upon perusing, let reason straight judge
How far fled from reason thyself herein art.
My retreated case (whereat thou didst erst
grudge)

Is of matter present a principal part,
Between which and thy case thou mayst drive
a cart.

Distinction of terms in our main matter meant,
Is (at next) a very far set incident.

But though thou wilt say thou canst draw this
thy case

To stand with (or within) our ground principal,
Yet is it needless to be brought here in place.
Distinction of these terms and other all.

I know and can weigh as well as a fly shall,
This digression, in telling, lost time before,
And, now in repeating it, would lose time more.

[M. iv. v.]

Sir, it may length time, but not lose time;
friend fly,

Length of time is no loss of time to thee indeed;
Length of time is thy gain, but I lose thereby;
Long time winneth the long life and loseth my
quick speed,

Which I should quickly have were this quickly
decreed;

Of this my fruitless walk avoiding the way
To win way more fruitful this way let's assay.

From pith of this process (fly) where we fled
out,

Thither retreat we, more loss of time to flee.
This repetition which thou wouldst bring about,
As winning thereof winneth nought at length
to thee,

So losing thereof loseth nought at length by me.
Since repetition the fly could not recover,
He shook his head, and so let it pass over.



[N.i.r.]
¶The spider (reducing the fly to the principal matter) moveth the trial to be had in his own lordship, which the fly misliketh. Whereon ensueth a glance at the diversity of government, between one spider and twelve flies. Cap. 27.



[N.i.v.]
ERE while (by prescription of old flies) thou
leddest
All holes in lattices to be other flies' and thine,
In which prescription against us, as thou
saidst,

Accustomed right in windows doth define
In the top and sides, our building to assign,
Which I denied, saying our forefathers old
Prescribed for us to build here where we would.

Upon this issue thou shewedst thyself content
That custom should (being pleaded in law)
Judge how the case standeth by customs extant,
Pleading whereof to common law thou didst draw;
Pleading wherein, as thou saidst and I saw,
Should be in such place as I could not come to;
I denied trial there, and deny it I do.

Which denial to be reason, thyself told,
And here from purpose principal outfled we
By the digressing. But again to take hold,
And go forth therein, now let us further see,
Since the common law is as unmeet for me
As meet for thee, to plead custom herein
What other meet means? for us both we may
win.

What think you? (quoth the fly). Friend fly,
this think I,
Since I will not, and thou canst not, go hence,
So that we both shall remain here presently,
To hear and answer in personal presence,
Law, in my lordship, must try custom's defence.
Be ye there again? (quoth the fly). By my fay,
We shall catch birds to-morrow and flies to-day.

[N.ii.r.

Will is now come in again, and must be called
law,

By thy ground laid for copyhold at will;

It seemeth thou needst not care for my will a
straw,

As the homage presenteth (saidst thou) good or
ill; [spill.

So doth the lord's will in judgment save or
So should the lord's will do, sir, I therein
meant;

But here goeth the hare away, right to prevent.

I, being neither spider nor spider's peer,
Nor spider's tenant, nor spider's friend (ye say)
I may have quick speed and fail of good speed
here.

Though the homage should uprightly the ver-
dict lay, [likewise weigh,

And the lord (in judgment) with the right

Yet some say, sometime, that the law is ended

In some case, in some place, as folk are
friended.

And I (quoth the spider) being neither fly,
Nor to any fly of alliance or kin,
Nor taken any fly's friend, why may not I
In any pleading place, save that we be in,
Doubt there (as thou darest here) good speed
to win?

This case shall keep our case as the case now
falls

Both from Westminster Hall and all such law
halls.

Thou being abroad, buzzing in every place
Where thou hast more friendship, or less en-
mity
Than I have, thou may'st in every place pur-
chase
Friends against me more than I against thee;
And when we in pleading joined in issue be,
Thou may'st find friendship, to impanel the
quest [best.
Of twelve such friendly flies as seem for thee

[N.ii.v.
Which kind of trial (for my part) I like not.
Wise learned counsel costly fine pleas first de-
vise, [that,
With cost and pain long followed, and after
Twelve unlearned, rude, ignorant, corrupt flies
Shall strike the stroke, as blind affection doth
rise.

By excellent wits law is ever begun,
And by ignorant wits end of law oft won.

Which to help, were I one of the procurers,
I would think it far better to breed up in brood
One wise true judge than twelve foolish false
jurors.

It is (quoth the fly) as old flies understood,
Not more hard (for spiders) to spy twelve flies
good,
Than easy (for flies) to find one spider naught;
And now note we here to what end this is
brought.

In place of twelve flies were one spider placed,
To give verdict and judgment of matters clear,
Yet might that change bring small good speed
in great haste.

One wily learned spider might hurt as much
 here
 As twelve unlearned blunt flies, by ought doth
 appear; [ill),
 And twelve good flies should (for all flies are not
 Do more good than one ill spider, weigh who
 will.

Between one good spider and twelve ill flies,
 Or those twelve flies good and that one spider
 ill, [rise.
 Apt comparison (quoth the spider) doth not here
 But that one and those twelve draw we here
 until,
 (To work good or ill) of one good or ill will.
 And so then best or worst, twelve or one, let
 us try
 Th'one best sort of two to govern windows by.

[N.iii.r.
 And the one spider's part (in this part) I'll
 take. [the fly).
 And I'll take part with the twelve flies (quoth
 I'll lay first (quoth the spider) your part to
 shake,
 Reasons laid by a learned clerk formerly
 For the rule of one ruler capitally;
 Whose arch articles here together to weigh,
 In these next words here together I will lay.

Exempling the government of One Most High,
 He putteth the three persons, which three are
 God one.
 And further he bringeth in (this t'exemplify)

The ship, on one keel all parts stand everyone;
The house standeth under one top rafter alone;
T'host, under one captain; bees under one bee;
The cranes one crane; the herd one shepherd,
saith he.

To this (quoth the fly) another clerk answereth.
Similitude of God and man to man and man,
As far wide, as far set, the matter varieth.
And liberty (being God's great gift to scan)
To take from all no one by authority can;
As who say any one man's authority,
Shall not, or should not, lose all men's liberty.

Further (he saith) one man's judgment is sub-
dued,
To ill effects sooner than many can be,
As one bucket of water (in reason viewed)
May sooner be poisoned, we in reason see,
Than may a pool or a pond, and more, saith
he, [range,
Though one crane guide all, wherever cranes
Yet now this one, then that one, they ofttimes
change,

[N.iii.v.

Which example partly doth your part appal,
For it as much may a senate signify
As one, one time chosen, all times to rule all;
And where all bees follow one bee unchange-
ably,
Yet is that bee of a more excellency,
And of another kind than th'other bees are,
As the shepherd above the herd he did declare.

This last sample moveth choice of one ruler in
place,

Of a more excellent kind than the rest be.

The said learned man (quoth the spider) in this
case,

Replying to your clerk's reasons, this saith he :
First, where your clerk saith one wight's au-
thority

Cannot take all from liberty, this man sayeth
'Tis not liberty, to live as man's will weigheth.

But to live in th'ordinance of good laws;
And the order of nature (saith he) assigneth
Some to serve, some to rule, as aptness draws.
The weak wit, strong of body, to service in-
clineth;

The witty learned head, reason toward rule
combineth;

And a king, called in scripture God's anointed,
Hath (of God) gifts above the rest appointed.

God promiseth to rule the hearts of kings,
Which gift showeth a king above the rest,
And where it is more hard (by your clerk's
sayings)

To corrupt many than one, so our clerk wit-
nessed

More easy to find one good than many thus
'sessed,

Th'argument of these two, and our clerk anon
Choked your clerk with one reason joined here
upon.

[*N. iv. r.*

These three kinds of commonwealth he tried :
Of a king, of the peers, and of commons last.

In which as there may be three good rulings
weighed,

[N. iv. v.]

But witness thou with me as I will with thee,
That for my part I know, and for thine I trow,
We no whit mean those states embased to be
By our talk, as a king in property to show
Like a spider, or comparison to grow
In flies and a senate for property of flies,
Most rude of us; not so rude that enterprise.

Sir (quoth the fly) as you here for yourself say,
So may you here assuredly for me swear,
This example mean I to respect no way,
But only th' order of rule that those states bear.
And so resembling them and us, I whilere,
Intended, by way of example, to treat.
And do so (quoth the spider) an end to beat.

Then (with your favour) have at it (quoth the
fly)

Passing from all former clerkly argument,
To our own experience familiarly.
For flies government, I'll show good reason
bent
By sample of a senate standing in extent
At this present day from hundreds of years
past,
To this day prospering, and so like to last.

Itself being but a city, doth yet possess
Kingdoms far from it, in civil order such
As no king hath one realm in more quietness.
Just justice goeth forth there, whoever gruch,
Their people obedient, few other so much.
This sample of senate for flies' rule I say,
Against one spider, or one king, here I lay.

[O.i.r.]

The most (quoth the spider) that this maketh
for thee,

Is that that senate ruleth as well as a king;
To which one senate (for more there none be)
Many kings, in many realms, have sole govern-
ing, [proving,

Each one of whose governance, all (or most),
In both kinds of commonwealth, since they
began,

As good as that one senate, scan who can scan.

One king's rule as good as one senate's rule is,
Compareth herein (for rule) both our parts
even,

And many kings ruling so, the number in this
Showeth thy side to the worst shore to be
driven;

And by one reason more, more weakness is
given

Unto thy part, which plainly shall appear
In these my next words, now following here.

Although those senators in sundry respects,
Seem equal for governance in open show,
Yet in other sundry respects proof directs,
Show of one among all above all to grow.

One hath of all chief place and reverence, we
know, [stand,

In whose estate stay of the rest doth most
Having voice as much as twain in his own
hand.

In many and most things preëminence he hath,
Most like to kingly superiority;

Two parts of three, in senate's guiding path,

Are drawn out of kingly rule, in property,
Without which to govern well it will not be.
Thus a senate's rule, wherein ye your brag
brought,
Lacking aid of a king's rule (ye see) doth
nought.

[O.i.v.
I could (quoth the fly) say more, but I will not.
This case standeth not in our case principally,
This law, or that law, what law stand, it skill
not,

So the law and ministers give justice justly.
My cause is so just, that no just law fear I,
Nor for every fault in laws or lawyers guessed;
To remove laws and lawyers, I think not best.

Corruption in laws, or ministers of laws,
I wish us to redress rather than remove
Either laws or lawyers without weighty cause,
The case upon light cause if we should oft
preve,
Where it should ease one it might twenty ag-
grieve;
Devisers in such things may sooner devise
To show ten mischiefs than shape two reme-
dies.

Thou sayest well (said the spider) but to re-
volve,
Th'impediment in law of fond fly jurors,
I can no way other way resolve
But with them, and all pelting procurers,
To be quite cut off. As lawless enurers
Of verdicts false or foolish in this or that,
Sometimes they care not, most times they know
not what.

And sure (I think) this sore might be salved
soon,

Or the smart much eased, did discretion devise,
And diligence put in ure things meet to be done.
But to lords, laws, lawyers, homage and juries,
Corrupt friendship, thou laidest erst here in
such wise

As it generally appeareth to repine
Against all courts, as much as against mine.

[O.ii.r.

As much? yea, and so much more, sir, that,
except,

Your own self, no wight in your court I there
touched;

Your court of all officers is so clean swept
That none officer in that court can be couched,
But yourself, for yourself hath yourself
avouched,

Plaintiff, pleader, juror, Judge, and jailor.
Stop, fly! (what) from a reasoner to a railer?

I cry you mercy, Sir, if this do displease;
I reverse and revoke it straight, for I have
As small appetite as I shall have small ease
To move you. Well, since thou forgiveness
dost crave,

Stand up, fly, I forgive even as God forgave.
And how our said case (by custom) shall be
tried,

Let us yet once again search how to provide.

Concerning that provision, sir (quoth the fly)
If we here (in this your present court) did make
Agreement to try this determinately,

Though I hope (as I hope) I should no wrong
take,
Yet humbly I beseech you, for my mind's sake,
Since my heartless heart against this trial
swells,
To grant to try this case some way, somewhere
else.



[O.ii.v.]

¶They agree to be tried by arbitrament,
 whether all or how many holes in all windows
 belong to spiders, and how many to flies, the
 spider choosing for his part the ant or pismire,
 the fly choosing for his side the butterfly.
 Whereupon they, th'one couple in one part,
 and th'other couple in another part, talk to-
 gether forthwith.

Cap. 28.



[O.iii.v.]

NOW (quoth the spider) by this cross of
 ten bones,
 There liveth not thy like (for a fly) I trow;
 For tongue wit thou art the fly for the nonce.

But go to : let us toward end some way grow.
I showed my mind last, wherefore thy mind
now show,

What way (as thou thinkest) we may yet best
purvey

To knit up this knot, without further delay.

The best way in my mind, when all ways are
cast,

Is that one (quoth the fly) that I touched twice,
To have been our trial in all cases past,

Which was, to put the whole in compromise.

Fly ! this last one case to be tried in that wise ?

I grant thee. I thank you (quoth the fly) pray-
ing,

That we may name our daysmen in this daying.

I name (quoth the spider) a cousin of mine,
Pierce pismire called Antony, ant otherwise,

Of person small, of wit great upright and fine.

And I (quoth the fly) whatever hap shall rise,

My grandsire Bartilmew butterfly devise ;

Of body big, of wit and speech blunt and plain.

Well (quoth the spider) agree we on these
twain.

They did so, and forthwith there lighted by
chance,

Hard by the cobweb's side, the butterfly ;

Wherewith one of the young spiders did ad-
vance,

At th'old spider's commandment, in haste to
hie,

For the ant to repair to him by and by.

Speed came so to pass, that at th'old spider's
hand, [to stand.

The young spider, out of hand, brought th'ant

[O.iii.v.]

¶The spider to the ant, and fly to butterfly
 (after words of greeting) declare, that they are
 chosen their arbiters herein, wherein the ant
 and butterfly promise to do their best, and they
 then anon draw all four together in (or at) the
 cobweb.

Cap. 29.



[O.iv.r.]

THE ant to the spider made curtsey low,
 Wherewithal the spider to the ant did
 draw,
 Smiling and becking on him, in most loving
 show.

They shook hands mannerly as ever I saw.
But for flies, as *Stans puer ad mensam* showeth
law

For making of curtsy or shaking of hands,
Butterflies pardon flies, bound hand and foot in
bands.

The spider, as of use in talk new entered,
(Friends ask of friends the state of their
friends friendly),

Asked how his cousins (th'ant's father and
mother) did,

His brothers, sisters, with all kin and ally.

Th'ant said they did well, and, in like words
hearty,

Asked him how his aunt spider and all theirs
fared; [declared.

The spider, with thanks to th'ant, their healths

The fly of the butterfly, with tears tender,

Asked to know his grandam butterfly's estate,

With all uncles and aunts, of their engender.

The butterfly said well, and bid him animate

To be of good cheer false heart to captivate.

Reason then ebbing, tears of nature's flowing,

To show their griefs as reason might make
showing.

The spider to th'ant, and fly to butterfly,

Discoursed their griefs apart, and how they
therein,

Refusing sundry ways of end, finally

Chose them twain for arbiters some end to win.

And since th'one twain and th'other twain are
of kin,

Th'one chooseth th'one, th'other chooseth
th'other. [t'other.

Both promised their best, the t'one and the

[O.iv.v.

¶The spider declareth, and the fly granteth the issue to be, that all flies claim (in freehold) all holes in all windows to be theirs by custom, and spiders claim all holes with all parts of all windows to be their freehold by custom. And after talk between them therein had, th'ant requireth full instruction of the two parties to their two arbiters. Cap. 30.



[P.i.r.

THE spider and fly thanking the other both,
They four thereupon drawing together all,
The spider directly to the matter goeth.

Cousin ant and fellow butterfly, ye shall
Understand that we twain do you twain now
call,
Not to weigh all cases in which we contend,
But one, on which one all seem to depend.

The fly claimeth by common custom beyond
mind,
All holes in all lattices flies' freehold to be,
And spiders (saith he) by custom are assigned,
To build in sides or in top; whereto, mark ye,
I say that custom awardeth all windows free
At spiders' wills without that any flies
Have any such right, by custom's warrantise.

That this is our issue, we do both agree,
And upon this issue we be both agreed
That you two by arbitrament shall decree,
What custom hath herein directly decreed.
Is it thus, fly? (quoth th'ant). Yea (quoth the
fly) indeed.
As conscience in you twain for us twain shall
try [I.
How custom doth stand, so (for my part) stand

Thou seemest (quoth the spider) a costermonger,
Conscience every handwhile thou dost cry.
I must (quoth the fly) see some token stronger
Ere I can suppose you of that mystery.
I call not for conscience more commonly
Than you speak of it sealed, fly, I told thee
erst,
Cause why, that conscience at last end should
be pursed.

[P.i.v.]

That's now (quoth the fly) if these two now take
end,

As I hope they shall, but here me thinketh I
smell

That your cast is conscience thus to suspend,
First till th'end, and then at th'end fair and
well

Cut conscience off, conscience so to expel,
As when all is done, conscience may safely say
And swear that conscience came not here this
day.

Then conscience or I the t'one shall be for-
sworn; [four
Reason, law, custom, and conscience, these
To be our grounds in trial I swear befor.
Then (quoth the fly) in last end of this last hour,
Let conscience come in to save that oath of
your.

What thing can conscience do here, fly, sayest
thou?

Three things, sir (said the fly) which I will
tell you.

First, conscience as even balance may evenly
weigh [flies;

What custom yieldeth to spiders, and what to
Second, conscience may weigh what reason
can lay,

What good and what ill custom doth exercise
In either part. Thirdly, conscience may devise
To allow the good and disallow the ill.

Whereon these two may award as conscience
will.

These two, fly (as my meaning was to take
 them),
 We choose daysmen to try this by reason clear,
 But (not arbiters), chancellors thou dost make
 them,
 By conscience to judge how much custom doth
 here,
 And what good or ill, in custom doth appear.
 Last case of which twain (by thee craftily
 couched),
 In th'issue that we join on is no whit touched.

[P.ii.r.

The point that we pitch on to try out the sooth,
 By reason (not scrupulous conscience), is
 this,—
 Nor what custom is, but what custom doth;
 How good or how ill custom itself is,
 Is another farther case. Which, fly, I wis,
 When we shall try, by conscience with reason,
 It will bring small brag for thy side to season.

For fine cousin ant, and goodman butterfly,
 What interest custom doth give to him and me,
 How much or how little in windows low or
 high,

As you by reason agree, so I agree.
 To this asked the butterfly, Fly, what say ye?
 Since who may not as he will, must as he may.
 I say (said the fly) as master spider doth say.

There saidst thou wisely (said the spider) and
 note,
 Thou shalt by that saying no damage sustain.
 If reason win thee this case every iote,
 Conscience (by reason) must me straight con-
 strain

[P.iii.v.
¶They (in couples separate again) declare each
how he would have his arbiter handle his part.
And first is here told in their persons the tale
of the spider to the ant. Cap. 31.



[P.iii.v.
COUSIN ant (quoth the spider) that ye be
wise
It is to me known, whereto all folk do know
That unto the wise few words at full suffice;
And to your wisdom I doubt not your show
Of friendship naturally to me to grow;
For ye know as we differ far in stature,
So we in kindred join nigh by nature.

Precedent wherein sought, what old records
carry,

Shall show no record of solemn solemnity,
That ever spider and ant did yet marry,
Which growth (I say) of kindred, not of enmity,
Did I (in you), by ingrate indemnity,
Doubt here wisdom's judgment or nature's
kindness,

I were a beast of beetle-headed blindness.

Which two in their workings to give or take
right,

Nature worketh friendly, wisdom worketh
surely.

Though right in each cause seem the post of
most might,

Yet want of wisdom (whose policy purely)
In sentence or semblance, stern or demurely,
Should set forth that right, might, in conclu-
sion quick,

Thwight that mill-post of right to a pudding
prick.

As if *Crossum caput*, like an ass in a case,
Setting forth a right homily in rude terms bare
A witty learned head, that right in that place
Did finely pronounce those two tales should de-
clare,

Forty pence difference, in right to compare.
One tale in two tellers, with one intent told,
May differ in show, as doth brass and fine gold.

[*P.iv.r.*

And wisdom's sure drifts had, if nature's
friendship lack,

To take, hear, and tell that tale in friendly
wise, [wrack;

That right with that wisdom may yet run to

Thus wisdom to work surely by policies,
And nature to work friendly, both must arise
To join in one in friends by friends required,
To obtain things at hands of friends desired.

Which policy and friendship, where they are
knit

Against parties to try things in strife growing,
They call craft and corruption every whit;
But policy and friendship with parties showing
Those parties praise both with open mouth
blowing; [them;

Both standing against folks, folks daily accuse
Both standing with folks, folks hourly use
them.

But to show our case out of accusation,
In putting policy and friendship in ure,
Mark this short circumstance in approbation.
Compromise, the end of causes to allure,
Two sorts of election in course doth procure
In choice of the chosen parties, (here mean I)
To arbitrate all debates indifferently.

One is, that the two parties in strife moved
Do choose arbiters, to them both indifferent;
Th'other is that either party grieved,
Doth choose for himself such as he knoweth
bent,

To take end or leave end, as he will assent.
The first way of both (though it the best way
be)

It cannot be had between the fly and me,
[P.iv.v.

In this case present, among spiders and flies,
We all can no one indifferent provide.
Affinity or affection doth so devise

That all be parties on th'one or th'other side.
But might (and should) this case this first way
 be tried,
Then might ye honestly lean partially
To neither side, by friendship nor policy.

Howbeit this other case bringeth this other
 cause,
The fly, for himself, and myself, for me,
This choice have chosen, so that this thus
 draws
Another myself I choose you here to be.
Whereby in all friendly policy (ye see),
Of honesty to stick to my side just,
Not only ye may, but also ye must.

And (as I said), I doubt not but ye will,
And pray ye do. But promise formerly,
Of known reward at end, to flee the ill
Of suspect bribery; though I presently
Rate not reward, yet if hereafter I
May you requite in pleasure one or other,
Then think yourself as nigh it as another.

Sir, said the ant, your rated ruled reward,
Now or at end, if I herein appease you,
Is not the thing that I so much regard,
But at the end as ye see how I ease you.
I say no more, but use me as it please you.
Cousin, well said (said then the spider) and sith
This point is past, pass we now to the pith.

[Q.i.r.]

All holes in all windows (as the fly saith),
Are flies' freehold, and that we spiders hold,
Right nought by right, but sides and tops on
 heith.

And we (say I) hold all, thus to be told,—
 Holes, sides, and tops, broad, narrow, deep,
 and sholde.
 Upon which issue you two must first hear,
 And after judge which side bringeth proof most
 clear.

Wherein for me, of ancient parentage
 Ye shall hear spiders speak, both sage and
 wise;
 And on the fly's behalf, here now in gage,
 There will come forth a sort of forked-tailed
 flies,
 That will not stick to tell a hundred thousand
 lies,
 And say and swear that they say true; howbeit,
 Ye will (I doubt not) trust them as is meet.

And when ye herein have done what ye may
 To make our evidence shine clear in show,
 And darkened theirs, your wisdom shall sure
 weigh,
 The gross rude butterfly to end to grow
 What way ye will. And thus, for high and
 low,
 After words great and many, where few might
 seem fit,
 Into your hands the matter I commit.

Uncle (quoth the ant) I perceive your mind
 At full, and shall at full do all my best
 Wherein to do you good: if I can nought find,
 Yet shall ye (for me) stand harmless at least.
 Upon this conclusion these twain did rest.
 And now between the fly and the butterfly
 What way was had ensueth ensuingly.

[Q.i.v.]

¶The tale of the fly to the butterfly how he
shall use the fly's part. Which done, the ar-
biters withdraw themselves toward the top of
the window.

Cap. 32.



[Q.ii.v.]

GOOD grandfather, since we two (said the
fly)
One flesh and blood by nature's working are,
In that I from you descend lineally,
As in degrees our pedigrees declare,
And that nature naturally taketh care
To see success of her succeeded birds,
I will not length this piece with painted words.

But nature's zeal I set to intercess
 To you, for me, without more words of me,
 To do your best in this my deep distress,
 Wherein what way to work as I best see,
 That shall I show. But ere we so far be,
 Hear me disclose (for our purposéd cause),
 A necessary brief conceived clause.

We hear and see gifts of nature are divers;
 Some be fair, some tall, some have strength,
 some wit,
 Some in science excellent contrivers,
 Some have small wit, and have much truth
 with it,
 With many more than now to move were fit.
 And this move I to move here only now,
 Difference in gifts between the ant and you.

The ant hath gift of right good wit (no doubt)
 And thereto (for an ant) learned excellently;
 And you have gift of plain[t]s stern and stout,
 Not being given so much ingeniously
 To learned judgment; and yet this know I
 No wight can prove from hence to England's
 end
 That ever ye brake promise with your friend.

[Q.ii.v.

But that ye would and durst perform the same;
 And this to this in you right well is known,—
 A ground once in your head, fastened in frame,
 Let learned lawyers pipe up trumpets blown
 Of rules in law to rule you as their own,
 Yet shall their reasons no whit make ye start
 From that ground on your or on your friend's
 part.

Which property is worth ten thousand mark
In you to me, in case of compromise,
For which against the ant, that cunning clerk,
Mine arbiter I did you here devise
To hold your hold in blunt assuréd wise;
Either this matter wholly to recover,
Or save (at least) my side from giving over.

The ant is sharp and fine, as ye are blunt and
gross;
The ant hath circumspection, ye have none;
You packstaff plain, the ant crafty and close;
The ant civil, you sturdy as the stone.
This said brief blunt and sharp comparison
Shall show who showeth most brag to stint this
strife,
The blunt whetting whetstone, or sharp
whetted knife.

To this the butterfly said: Fly, son mine,
The gross blunt whetting whetstone fear thou
not
To match this whetted penknife, sharp and fine.
Tell thou to me plainly what is the knot
That I shall knit or unknit in this plot;
And th'ant shall with a tabor take a wat
As soon as make me shrink from thee in that.

[Q.iii.r.]

Sir (said the fly) our issue which ye heard
To ripe remembrance, hear yet once again.
I say all holes in windows are referred,
In tenure of freehold, to us t'appertain,
All spiders in sides and in tops to remain.
Which he denieth, affirming they and he
Hold all parts in all windows in tenure free.

In which two sides you two the truth must try,
And then determine, as reason can decree,
Upon which side this shall by custom lie,
Wherein ye shall have flies to speak for me,
Sage, wise, learned, and well spoken as can be;
And for the spider's part, it is no doubt
Of spiders there will be a spiteful rout.

The knot herein which I would have you knit,
Is this,—either do me good, or do none ill;
If in this matter ye can win no whit,
Then lose right nought, but let it stand even
still

As it erst stood. And if th'ant no way will
Give any place, come, hearken in your ear.
Wherein he whispered words, what I wist
ne'er.

Whereat the spider cast eye to them both.
Wherewith the butterfly from the fly flieth,
And the ant from the spider away goeth.
Each one of whom (anon) the other espieth,
And each of both to other hastily hieth.
The spider straight into his house stepped
stoutly;

The fly fell on knees to his book devoutly. [Q.iii.v.

Th'ant and the butterfly together drew
To th'extreme part of the window on the top
side,

And after saluting in their manner due,
Both studying how th'entry should be first ap-
plied,

They both, casting their eyes about, espied.
On th'one side spiders approaching, six or
seven,

And on th'other side, flies ten or eleven.

Neither sort the other ought saluted they,
But both sorts to th'arbiters made curtsey low.
The ant prayed both parties in their approach
to stay,
Till the butterfly and he (in talk) might know
And agree what way of proceeding should
grow.
With this they all stepped back and there
stayed,
Whereupon th'ant to the butterfly said.



[Q. iv. r.
¶The ant and the butterfly being met in the
top of the window, certain spiders on their
one side, and certain flies on their other side,
whom th'arbiters cause to stand back while
they two talk together.

Cap. 33.



[Q. iv. v.
BEFORE we further wade, master butter-
fly—
No master, sir; I am but a yeoman (quoth he).
That's no matter (said th'ant) as the case doth
lie;

But, gentleman or yeoman, whatever ye be,
Since we two come hither these two to agree,
Let us be agreed on the next and best way
To bring them agreed, in matter here to say.

Our way wherein (as thinketh me) is this.
We both must banish all partiality,
That by corrupt affection engendered is,
By affinity, or consanguinity,
So that we clearly cleve unto equity.
As of these two neither of either shall
Prove us, or either of us, unequal.

Nay (by my father's soul), said the butterfly,
I will play no whit of *venum mecum* his part,
Hold with the hare and run with the hound will
not I;
Such reasons as out of this blunt brain may
start
For my friend, run they right run they over-
thwart,
Out will I pour them, and in God's name,
For your friend, as ye see cause, do you the
same.

These two tales (in these two persons) seemed
here told,
In th'one of plainness, in th'other of policy.
The butterfly spake his thought (as he much
would)
Th'ant contrary talked dissimilately.
His moving the butterfly to indifferency
(Himself showing a show to be indifferent)
Seemed moved, for this craft covered intent.

[*R.i.r.*

The ant's drift was the butterfly to drive
From affectionate standing on the fly's side,
Indifferently to stand, while himself contrive
To be partial with the spider, which applied,
Might (thought the ant) to the butterfly un-
spied,

Draw him to withdraw some part of affection,
Fore bent in his breast, for the fly's protection.

But when the butterfly, like a stiff-necked cur,
(As ye have heard) made answer unto the ant,
So that this way would not the butterfly stir,
Th'ant (on this plain song having shift of de-
scant)

Asked the butterfly: Come we this instant
To help the spider and fly to take end?
Yea, sir (said the butterfly): that I intend.

If I for the spider and you for the fly
Show ourselves not arbiters but parties,
Reasoning each for each affectionately,
What end between us twain for them can rise
More than themselves in themselves can devise?
I cannot tell (quoth the butterfly), howbeit,
Hark what way is best we take (after my wit).

You, reasoning for your friend and I for my
friend,

Upon our evidence to this issue laid,
If my reasons seem better than yours at end,
You allowing them above your own, here
weighed,

Or your the better reasons in my head stayed,
I allowing them likewise above mine own,
Reason may set end, and time show end, well
grown.

[R.i.v.]

Upon this they both were agreed anon
The spiders and flies on both sides to call near.
Both being agreed that the ant should propone,
The spiders now standing on the right hand to
hear,
The flies on the left side, as nigh did appear.
Both ant and butterfly (each in a chair set)
To declare the case the ant his tongue hath
whet.



[R.ii.v.

¶Th'ant declaring the cause of that meeting,
the spiders and flies acknowledging the same,
and that they come to give evidence, the flies
are appointed to depart while the spiders first
show what they can say for their part.

Cap. 34.



[R.ii.v.

KINSFOLK spiders and friends flies, I
doubt no whit
But in this terrible trembling tragedy
Between the spider and fly, in cobweb knit,

Ye know the mischance mischanced lately,
And how those chances chanced to chance,
whereby
The spider's palace is deeply perished,
And the fly's person deadly perilled.

Also (I suppose) ye know that we twain,
I for the spider and he for the fly,
Are chosen arbiters such end t'obtain
As evidence shall show, both sides to try.
Which to show (I deem) ye appear presently.
Said one spider first, and then one fly, All this,
We know, and to give evidence our coming is.

This known (quoth th'ant) doubting whether
ye know
How far our authority stretcheth here
To meddle in this matter, hear me show.
Number and weight of strifes, cloudy and clear,
Between these twain many and great appear;
Of all which authority have we none
To touch in this talk, save only this one.

The fly claimeth all holes in all windows,
To pass and repass, to be free for flies all;
Alleging that spiders (by all old shows),
In tops and sides have place especial.
The spider claimeth the whole in general.
To hearing whereof, we our award would knit,
What part each part shall have, from all to
no whit.

[R.iii.v.

Sir (said the spider and fly) that erst had said,
This know we, and have purveyed evidence
As clear for each part as each part can see
weighed.

Then (quoth the ant) for our intelligence,
Will ye, friend butterfly, that the flies go hence,
While we hear the spiders speak? Yea (quoth
he);

Cousins flies, stand back till ye calléd be.

The flies stepped back, the spiders forward
drew,

Standing before those two in their chairs set
Declaration to whom what they herein knew
Was devised and determined ere they there
met.

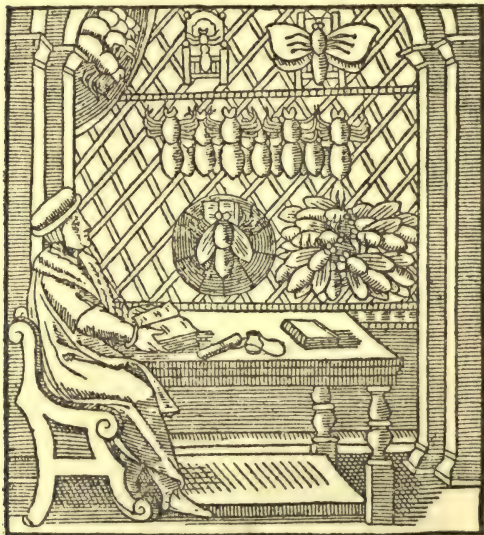
Wherein for entry to let longer let,
The butterfly straight entering as here ensueth,
Th'ant provoketh the spiders to speak the
truth.



[R.iii.v.

¶ After a few words between the ant and butterfly, one spider, as mought be for all, declareth to those two th'arbiters all evidence that all spiders for their part can devise. And that done, the spiders are commanded away, and the flies bidden to approach.

Cap. 35.



[R.iv.r.

MASTERS (or lords) spiders, what shall I call ye?

In things here now to talk hark well this one thing :

At my blunt behaviour, bark ye or bawl ye,

If ye bring in sophistry or book learning
 To blind mine eyes with, I give you plain
 warning,
 Tom troth will not be wound that way. And
 thereby
 Be warned to talk truly and homelily.

They will do so (quoth the ant) I dare say;
 So will the flies then (quoth th'other) I dare
 swear.

Then (quoth th'ant) without more delated delay,
 What ye spiders can speak, speak while we
 give ear.

With this, one spider (as all agreed were),
 Standing foremost, and as a bolt upright,
 Soberly said, with curtsey low as he might:—

May it (masters) like you, a spider am I,
 Of such years as no living flies years may,
 Witness (by remembrance) my full age; for
 why?

I took life in this world, (old spiders would say)
 Just in the leap year, before the ill May day.
 My parents (as I am) were black nebbed and
 bald;

The longlived stock of spiders they were called.

By part of my which parents, this I gather,—
 In their times, worshipful spiders (though I
 say it),

My father, grandfather, and great grand-
 father,

Would say, as they heard elder spiders weigh [it,
 That every window, hung it, stood it, or lay it.
 All parts of the same, in lowest and highest,
 Were spiders' freehold, both farthest and
 nighest.

[R. iv. v.]

And ever have been (said they) at will to build
In part or in all, and that they could not know
That ever fly (of right) any part there held.
These few words of forefathers spiders make
show,

In all parts of all windows the right to grow,
On our part, the contrary whereof to weigh,
No spider hath heard any spider ought say.

Say all ye spiders thus? (quoth th'ants). Yea
(quoth they).

Have ye heard (quoth the butterfly) any wight
Say ought herein saving spiders? quoth they,
Nay.

Have ye (quoth th'ant) ought else in this to re-
cite?

Yea (quoth one spider) standing behind all
quite;

I have a counter verse to sing in this place,
Which shall be countered with the flies face to
face.

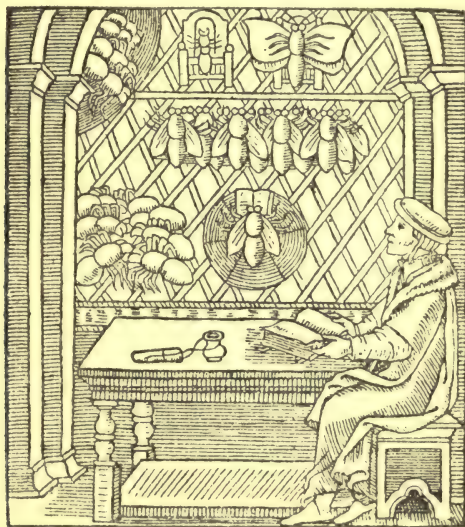
Ye shall (quoth the butterfly) sing that verse
anon.

But we must hear the flies indifferently,
As we have heard you, till which time be ye
gone.

They stepping back, the flies forthwith soberly
Stood in their place. Th'arbiters glancingly,
Ere the flies ought said in their repairing near,
Had between themselves these words, which
ye shall hear.

[The tailpiece as on page 38 occurs here in
the original.]

[S.i.v.]
 ¶ Upon a short talk between the arbiters, one
 fly, spokes-fly for all flies, discloseth all evi-
 dence for their part. Wherewith the flies, at
 commandment, depart aside. Cap. 36.



S.i.v.
 T HE spider's tale (quoeth th'ant) seemeth
 a choking choke-plum
 Against flies. Ere ye (quoeth the butterfly)
 grutch
 Against any part, *audum altum paltum*.
 HEY. III. M

This term, set far from the Latin, and more
such,
Learned in the school of ignorance, he spake
much,
And understood little. But this being stayed,
An ancient fly stood forth, and thus to them
said.

My masters arbiters, I am a fly
Of such age as spiders few or none may boast.
My father's hand-writing (for witness) have I
That I was bred in the year of the great frost,
Before the great sweat, when many flies were
crossed,
Out of the book of life, who by extreme cold
Were frozen to death, midaged, young, and
old.

In all which days to this day I have heard flies
say :
All holes in all windows, where they stood or
stand,
Have been (and be) flies' freehold, as their
highway,
To pass and repass, and that the spiders' band
Owners of the sides and tops only are
scanned.
Whereto I nor no fly (I dare verify)
Ever heard any fly say contrary.

Flies (quothe the butterfly), take ye this tale
true?
Yea (quothe they). Know ye aught (quothe
th'ant) but by flies?
Nay (quothe they). Forth (quothe the butterfly)
pursue,

Can you (or any of you) aught else devise
Whereby further light in your right may arise?
Yea, sir, said one fly, then standing all behind,
To the spiders' teeth anon, I'll tell my mind.

That shall ye do (quoth th'ant); but, friend butterfly,
[S.ii.r.]

Will ye first require them to withdraw aside,
While you and I some part of this past may
try?

Hence (quoth the butterfly); wherewith thence
they hied.

They twain then only there, themselves they
applied,

Each one with other, together to consult
What fruit out of this erst said their brains
could bolt.

Ere either of other did herein ought break,
Th'ant devised what way best to enter it;
The butterfly studied not what words to speak,
But to speak with voice clear, he coughed and
he spit,

Till his voice was much more clear than his wit.
And yet far from witless, but plain blunt gross-
ness

Showed his words oftentimes to show witless
looseness.

[The tailpiece as on page 28 occurs here in the
original.]

[S.ii.v.
¶The arbiters (in debating th'evidence on both parts given) cannot otherwise agree, but that the same weigheth even as much for the tone part as for the tother, at end whereof they call again all the said sort. Cap. 37.



[S.iii.r.
SAY (said th'ant) your opinion uprightly :
What weigheth this evidence on both sides,
think you?
To try which side showeth best (quoth the butterfly),

These words as much matter for flies to allow
As for spiders. So do they (quoth th'ant)
avow,

As much matter in words to allow, in likewise,
In spiders for spiders, as in flies for flies.

And more, for th'one half well nigh that spiders
claim

The flies do grant, but spiders grant unto flies
No part of theirs, which is to the flies a maim.
The flies' own tale sides and tops of windows
tries

To be the spiders' by customs warrantise.
Whereto the spider's tale for the flies' part
weighed,

Weigheth no hair's breadth in windows for the
flies' aid.

Spiders (quoth the butterfly) show themselves
here

More siding to their side than flies to theirs are.
As flies indifferently make custom to appear
Sides and tops of windows for spiders' share,
And that flies (by custom) the holes theirs do
'clare

So should spiders indifferently consider
To lay (as flies do) both customs together.

Spiders (quoth th'ant) take those customs far
unlike,

Theirs to grow of right, flies' of usurpation.

If (quoth the butterfly) the flies do here pike

That quarrel to spiders, in custom's usation,

That is tit for tat in this altercation.

So that for any thing any party can get,

Both parties in all things yet on even hand are
set.

[S.iii.v.]

But to try how good or how ill custom is
Is no part of our charge; ye know we must try
How much or how little custom doth in this,
Preferring or debarring claim of each party
Wherein, for all laid here yet again say I,
Flies lay (where reason and equalness be
guiders),

As much for flies, as spiders lay for spiders.

Well (quoth th'ant) as we both heard both
parts apart,

So now let us both both parties together hear,
How we both between both parties can the hare
start.

Both agreed that all on both parts should ap-
pear.

They did so, and all on both sides settled near,
The ant declaring the pith of all yet wrought,
Entry to matter more, th'ant induction brought.



[S. iv. r.]

¶Th'ant sheweth to them all that th'evidence
weigheth to one effect on both sides, so that
all resteth now upon knowledge which part
to credit most. And upon that motion, one
spider and one fly fall in argument to try the



same. Wherein is touched (partly) the prop-
erties of credence, worship, and honesty, they
agreeing that credence standeth upon honesty,
as thus,—as every spider or fly is honest, so is
he credible. Which talk ended, they are all
again sequestered.

Cap. 38.

[S.*iv.v.*

FRIENDS all, ye all erst assembled in parties
twain,

Before us twain here for both parties have de-
clared

By the mouths of twain, two tales, which two
contain

One effect. For the matter self in regard,
The only difference in both being conferred,
Is this,—what one spider for all spiders layeth,
The self-same sentence one fly for all flies
sayeth.

As thus : that spider said all spiders have laid
All holes in all windows to be spiders' freehold ;
Which self saying that said fly (for all flies)
said

In few words, at full then, th'effect to unfold.
Both parties present, to this tale is to be told,
Some matter to try : what appearance may rise,
Which part we shall credit most, spiders or
flies.

With this, a well-spoken spider stepped in
place.

Saying : If comparison in credence grow,
Then must ye with us spiders rule this case.
Spiders have been and be worshipful, ye know.
And flies honest (quoth a witty fly) I trow,
And of credence ; the property of majesty
Standeth not more by worship than by honesty,

Nor so much neither ; as all kinds of flies
think,

No, no colour of cause of credence can stand,
Whereas worship with honesty doth not link,

And honesty without worship (skilfully
scanned)
May have, and must have, credence at every
hand. [lay,
If the spiders' worships for credence do here
Flies' honesties shall spiders' worships out-
weigh.

[T.i.r.
Were this gay couched case (quothe the spider)
granted,
More credence for flies than for spiders might
be guessed,
Which showeth you to deem as you it avaulted,
That no spider, but all flies, are honest,
And all spiders worshipful, wherein ye expressed
Cause of credence, in flies' honesties to grow
Much more than in spiders' worships there
may show.

Credence, honesty, and worship, thus take I,—
Credence in this word trust plainly term we
may;

Honesty, virtue morally and civilly;
Worship, reverence, or estimation to say;
Honour is also reverence, as use doth weigh;
Honour and worship both one in use take we,
Save honour is reverence in the higher degree.

Now note that the full cause of credence or
trust

Springeth and spreadeth out of virtue or
honesty,

And honour, or worship, is duely discussed,
Due where virtue or honesty is, then see
Who is not honest, worshipful he cannot be;
For worship and honesty, th'one and th'other,
The t'one of the twain dependeth on the t'other.

What (quoth the fly) meaneth this circum-
quaque?

This (quoth the spider)—where ye (in your last
saying)

Separate in sunder worship and honesty,
Worship to spiders and honesty to flies laying,
Flies' credence above spiders' t'advance in
weighing,

Worship and honesty I join so that here
Worshipful spiders be honest spiders clear.

[T.i.v.]

Honest spiders are worshipful (quoth the fly).
By honesty, and credible too, no, nay;
But where spiders' honesty standeth awry,
Worship and credence stand awry too, I say.
So (quoth the spider) be honesty away,
The flies' credit standeth a-crook even as far
As the spiders'; but let us touch this case now.

Grant here's a spider of honesty no whit,
To whom admit a fly of great honesty,
The spider (not the fly) to authority knit;
Is not that spider, in authorised degree,
More worshipful and credible taken to be
Than that inferior fly? (Quoth the fly) No,
Which ye shall hear, but first hear how your
words go.

Credence, honour, worship, or reverence,
To virtue or honesty ye first avouched due;
Last, authority ye bring in assistance,
Th'unhonest authorised thereby t'ensue,
In worship and credence. Yea (quoth he),
that's true.

And in touching that first of these two cases,
I forgot this last, but both must have their
places.

As honour, or worship, and credence do depend
Upon all that are honest, by honesty,
So worship and credence in like case too bend
On all in authority, by authority.
Nay (quoth the fly) (quoth the spider) friend,
tell me,

Is not authority to be worshipped?
Yes, master (quoth the fly), or else God forbid.

[T.ii.r.]

All authority not against the great God,
In spiders under him placed as potentates,
In them and their substitutes, that God hath
bade

To be worshipped and obeyed in humble rates.
But authority and authorised states,
Cause of worship due to both, differ as far
As Jericho and Jersey in joining jar.

Authority, for itself, worshipped is ;
Th'authorised, for good use of authority,
Are duly revered, which good use if they
miss,
Worship or reverence to them given none
should be.

Yet there is (quoth the spider) we daily see
Before th'authorised curtesy made as low
To the ill as to the good, and more low, some
trow.

That curtesy (quoth the fly) rightly directed,
Runneth to th'authority in the authorised,
Not the authorised person, respected ;
Th'authority in the person here revered.
Th'authority for the person, not worshipped,
Nor the person for himself, lacking honesty,
Because he lacketh honest use of authority.

Spiders in authority without honesty,
 No worship in themselves (I say) is t'avouch;
 Flies in honesty, without authority,
 By that honesty, worship in themselves doth
 couch,
 And credence in both these parties is tried by
 like touch.

Thus dishonest spiders, being authorised,
 Be (for themselves) worshipped nor credited.

Be it (quoth the spider), but then to this put
 case

One spider and one fly of one honesty are;
 The honest spider placed in authorised place,
 The honest fly not. Doth not that spider's
 state declare

More worship and credit than that fly can com-
 pare?

More worship? yes: but more credence, no,
 say I,

Proof whereof ensueth (quoth the fly), by and
 by.

Honesty (I say as yourself erst here said)
 Is the root that credence and worship both
 twain

Grow on, so that our worship and credence,
 weighed

On worshipful authority, do not remain
 But on our honest use thereof; thus our chain
 That linketh us to credence is not authority,
 But good use of authority, by honesty.

Wherein I conclude flies of most base degree,
 Having like honesty to spiders most high,
 Have in likewise like credence of equity.

Not like reverent worship (I say) for why?
Spiders using authority honestly
For place and person both where case so en-
sues,

Flies to spiders humble reverence must use.

What is (quoth the spider) the difference in
show

Of one degree of credence in these two told?

This (quoth the fly)—By this example to know :
Two spiders' webs woven admit here to be
sold,

For stuff and all thing, both as one to behold,
Save th'one above th'other, more fair gloss
doth bear,

More pleasant to the eye, both one to the wear.

[T.iii.7.

Yet hath that glossy web estimation more
Than th'other, though both webs of one weav-
ing be;

And so for one credence in the two before;

Spiders' authority, used with honesty

They shine in beauty of a double degree.

So that though credence self be one in these
both,

Yet that gloss in that one, that other out goeth.

Then (quoth the spider) it serveth for some-
what,

Honest spiders in authority to stand

Above honest flies. Yea, but it serveth not

(Quoth the fly), for your part of the point to
hand,

To prove more credence, in honest spiders
scanned,

Than in honest flies, for in equal honesty

Standeth equal credit on both sides, ye see.]

Which you (my masters) having seen, being
wise, [hath less,
And that which part hath credence more, which
Of spiders or flies, is the thing to devise,
We pray you your judgment therein to express.
If we (quoth th'arbiters) in this case address
Ourselves to give judgment, will ye that abide?
Yea, yea (in Pilate's voice), all on both sides
cried.

Let them all (to the butterfly said the ant)
Depart, while we herein seek an end to find.
Content (quoth the butterfly) at your instant :
Trudge hence, ye flies (quoth he), as ye are as-
signed.

At wink of the ant away the spiders wind.
They all hereupon being gone forth forthwith,
They two herein proceeded as followeth.

[T.iii.v.

¶By th'ant's provocation the butterfly repeateth
th'argument before made, in his gross terms,
not far from full. And they twain seeming to
agree upon the point herein, they command
the spiders and flies back again.

Cap. 39.



[T.iv.r.

WILL ye (quoeth the ant) repeat us this
talk last?
I would, but I will not (quoeth the butterfly),
For I cannot, though my heart for it should
burst.

[*T. iv. v.*]

The fly to this for worship and credence said,
Though 'thority for itself worshipful be,
Yet winneth it no worship (in any wight laid)
To himself: for himself, outsepted that he
Use therein usation of said honesty;
But in misuse of 'thority, the fly told,
Worship or credence no wight self can hold.

Then the spider 'leged, one spider and fly one
They both in one 'gree of honesty being,
That spider in 'thority, that fly in none,
Whether worship and credence were not 'gree-
ing

More to that spider, then to that fly fleeing.
More worship, he granted, because honesty,
And 'thority joined; but more credence, no,
said he.

For honesty, and not authority, is root,
Said he, whereon all branches of credence
spring;

Then no honesty, no credence had in boot,
Like honesty, like credence is everything.
The spider then asked what difference in show-
ing

Of one 'gree of credence in these foretold
twain,
Which, by a web sample, the fly answered
plain.

Two spiders' webs of one stuff and workman-
ship,
Save th'one above th'other hath gloss more gay
To the eye, but for wear they differ not a chip;
Yet doth that glossy web bear the bell away.
And so the spider, to his honesty in stay,

Having 'thority above like honest fly,
 Credence shineth in the spider more beautefully.

[U.i.r.

Well said (said the ant); though these terms be
 but base

Yet approve they well that you perceive the
 pith,

Which, concerning credence, concludeth in
 this case, [with,

That the worst fly, and the best spider there-
 Where one degree of honesty concurrerth,

There one degree of credence, concurrerth like-
 wise [arise.

Whereon hark here what a strange case doth

Put case a duke of estate honourable

Affirming a tale, on his honour, for true :

A duck steppeth forth, and faith, it is a fable.

Were it not a case (trow you) as strange as new

That duke and that duck of one credit to view ?

The duke's and duck's honesty (quoth he) being
 one, [gone.

Their credence is one, by granted ground erst

From which ground (master ant) by my father-
 kin,

I will not start, but stand and stick even fast,

As unto this my body sticketh this skin.

Well (quoth th'ant) being at this point, with
 this past,

Further to proceed in this case what way to
 cast, [here.

Let us have these spiders and flies again

At beck of both, all before both did appear.

[The tailpiece as on page 38 here occurs in the
 original.]

[U.i.v.]

¶Th'ant telleth them that where th'evidence for both sides goeth to one effect, and that in debating which side is most credible to award the window unto, it is concluded that credence standeth upon honesty: and that as all spiders and flies are honest, so are they credible. Now must it first be tried, which side is most honest, thereon to judge which side is most credible.

Cap. 40.



[U.ii.r.]

At your last standing here, (quoeth th'ant)
the case stood
On trial in credence of spiders and flies,
Th'evidence for both being one and like good,

On which part of both most credence might
arise,

Wherein determinate trial to devise,
One couple of you, one spider and one fly,
Reasoned (byrlakin) prettily wittily.

Brief pith whereof (to present purpose) was
this,—

Honesty, ye agreed, of credence is the ground;
Concluding for all as each wight's honesty is
More or less, so more or less credence is bound.
All spiders and flies, of one honesty found,
Are of one credence, in that credence doth bend
All wholly upon honesty to depend.

Then as th'evidence on which side to lay best
Where credence lieth most, we thought best to
have tried,

So must we now for credence see some way
guessed

Which side bringeth most honesty testified,
And thereby most credit to this or that side.
Be it (quoth the butterfly); now let us see, sirs,
Who shall here win boot, in winning here his
spurs.

Another spider and fly to the helm stood,
A comely couple as were of these two kinds;
Their manner showed their bringing up to be
good.

Curtsey low to th'arbiters, as curtsey binds;
Behaviour most decent in uttering their minds;
As their talk was of honesty to devise,
So devised they their talk, honestly likewise.

[U.ii.v.

¶One spider and one fly reasoning which side
is most honest, agreeing in conclusion that
the honesty on both sides appeareth to them
two to be one, that fly requireth th'arbiters to
ponder the case as they shall think good.

Cap. 41.



[U.iii.r.

TO speak (quoth this spider) truth honestly
here,

Briefly in honesty both parts to compare,
Equality doth therein to me appear.
As right many spiders right honest there are,
So right many flies right honesty declare.
As honesty (itself) is one quality,
So, both parts qualified like, like honest be.

Sir (said this fly), this is of you qualified
 Right honestly, whereupon (with your assent,
 Under reformation) I would see here tried
 One thing herein to try what different extent
 Standeth in one degree of honesty here meant
 In both us foresaid parties, spiders and flies,
 Which in few words, I shall now to you devise.

Flies more than spiders twenty to one there are.
 Put then in each one person like honesty,
 In one spider and ten flies to compare.
 Showeth not here that most number in quantity
 To show here the most show of that quality?
 It showeth most (quoth the spider) and to show
 how,

Mark this short example that I shall show you.

One flower before two mirrors being set here
 Th'one mirror cracked in ten pieces sundry,
 Th'other whole. This flower in these glasses
 shall appear,

At the whole glass, as it is one flower only;
 The cracked glass showeth ten flowers ap-
 parently,

For of those ten pieces of glass every one,
 Each one piece (in itself), showeth one flower
 alone.

[U.iii.v.]

So this fair flower honesty, in one spider
 placed,

And ten flies, each one possessed of like fame,
 For honesty self, there is no more purchased
 In the ten flies, than in th'one spider to name.
 The only difference (I say) in show doth frame
 Ten flowers in the cracked glass, as thus to
 respect

Ten flowers in form, and one flower in effect.

That whole glass doth show one flower, and
is no more;

That cracked glass, making show of flowers
half a score,

There's yet but one flower at both these
glasses, lo!

As in both these parts one honesty, no more.
Well (quoth the fly), yet as I have said before,
One honesty in one spider and in ten flies,
Most show of that honesty in those flies rise.

Which show showeth (the honesty in all being
one)

A beauty shining of more excellency
In those ten flies, than in th'one spider alone.
Sir (said the spider), to speak indifferently,
Even so take it I: and even so grant it I.
My masters (to th'arbiters), the fly then said,
Weigh you how honesty is here to be weighed.



[U. iv. v.]

¶Th'arbiters commanding all to go apart again,
they fall in talking somewhat at large, touch-
ing both credence and honesty in both these
sides. Which done, to show therein their
minds, they call all before them again.

Cap. 42.



[U. iv. v.]

TH'ARBITERS, willing both parts to step
back straight,
Brother butterfly (said the ant), here ye see
Honesty on both these parts to poise in weight;
If more honest flies than honest spiders be,
Yet of both parts each one like of honesty,
The number more and less, as these two declare,
Both numbers of one honesty they compare.

For the honestness self, (quoth he) to that they
grew;
But the honestness in those flies showeth more
excellent,
As twenty flowers in the broken glass to view
Show of th'one flower in the whole glass far out
went.
Yea, in show (quoth th'ant) with you I do con-
sent.
But by their equal degree of that quality,
This spider and these flies equally honest be.

Well then, good master ant (quoth the butter-
fly),
We agree that the show of one honestness here
Upon the ten flies' part showeth more shin-
ingly
Than on the one spider's side in show can
'pear.
And for the honesty self, to draw to end near,
You answering one demand demanded by me,
Best part to principal purpose we shall soon
see.

Is not this argnification of honestness,
To see who are most honest, spiders or flies,
To try thereby the side most credible to guess,
In th'one evidence that both sides did devise
Each side for itself? Yes (quoth th'ant), that
none devise,
But granteth it. Since (quoth the butterfly)
that's trowth,
Hark what proof to purpose upon this case
groweth.

[X.i.r.—aa.

Let us here demit one spider and ten flies,
 All like honest, who, seeing two sue at law,
 That one spider, for th'one side, a witness lies,
 Those ten flies, to th'other side witnesses draw.
 I never wist wight that ever heard or saw
 But such ten flies' evidence more credibly
 weighed,
 Than such one spider's evidence weighed in
 aid.

Not so (quoth th'ant); for put case this fore-
 said sort :
 In witnessing one word in one tale erst told
 To them all, th'one spider doth after report
 That word was there and then said, and flies
 hold
 It was not said : in this case knoweth young
 and old
 This one spider must have in th'affirmative
 More credit than ten flies in the negative.

Master ant, flies' want of credence standeth
 not here,
 In the weakness of credence in the flies,
 But in weakness of credence in the case clear.
 Negative against firmative weakly lies;
 Forgetting and remembering thus this case
 tries :
 We may sooner forget that we heard last day,
 Than remember that we heard not, any way.

But for both parts here put affirmative case.
 This one spider affirmeth here, firmatively,
 That I lay (last night) in Northumberland
 place;

These ten flies say in Westmoreland place lay I.
In this affirmation deemation to try,
Which part hath here most credence in your
deeming?

The flies' (quoth the ant) apparently seeming.
[X.i.v.]

But since honesty and not credence is now
The thing to touch here in place and case present,

And that (for the honesty self) I prove to you
One degree of honesty in both sides bent,
That one and those ten have one honest extent.
Agree we for that part thus to resolve,
Which resolution let me to them revolve.

Be it (quoth he); but when talk of credence
cometh in,

I'll argue as I did now for credence again.
Do (quoth th'ant) if ye see thereby ought to
win. [twain;

All oft erst called, they called again to them
To whom the ant (as aptly did appertain)
In words for the matter briefly couched and
cast,

Pronounced to all what they two there passed
last.

[The tail-piece as on page 72 here occurs in the
original.]

[X.ii.r.]

¶Th'ant telleth them that they two determine honesty on both sides to be one, willing them to go forth in the matter. Wherewith one tart taunting spider, and one sharp saucy fly, forbearing till this time (with much pain) speaking or rather railing, stand now forth (upon tip-toes) to chop logic each with other in rude reasoning of this case.

Cap. 43.



[X.ii.v.]

OF spiders and flies, which part is most honest,
The trial is the thing we now stand upon,
Wherein for flies one his opinion expressed

That as flies in number are twenty to one
Above spiders, all on both sides every one
Being like honest, most honesty doth rise
To the flies' part, where the most number lies.

To this one spider's tale of the two glasses
touched,

Th'example showing more show of honesty
In the more than in the less number avouched;
Yet both parties being honest in one degree,
Both parties of like honesty they took to be,
And so to adjudge, we two having agreed,
Agree you how herein further to proceed.

With this, before all these spiders and flies here
flocked,

Up stood and outstart that couple of hare-
brains,

The spider and fly, that erst there bragged
and cocked.

Upon both their foreheads so swelled the veins
That their thus long silence was seen their
great pains

In cocking currish countenance no whit to seek,
Staring each on other, they stood cheek to
cheek.

Authority they took, none was to them given;
Of good manner void, in taunting smart smat-
terers,

Plainness without honesty they used even.

They both to side against side were no flat-
terers :

But like Isaiah in cheritress such chatters,
That being now bent to chat, their tongues to
stop, [chop.

With an axe as soon their heads off ye may

[X.iii.7.

Their talk, whether to repeat or to repress
Rude railing therein, brought me somewhat to
doubt;

But finally, upon my show to profess
The show of this matter, thus far gone about,
I thought it meet to show the show through-
out;

Namely, the case framed no more far nor high
Than of a poor spider, and a more poor fly.

These all (I say) standing before these two set,
Both bending their brows in case rehearsed
erst,

This foremost spider and fly, in furious fret,
Frowning each on other, this process they
pierced;

And vengeable venomly each other versed
Before they came to end; howbeit they began
In counterfeit coldness this matter to scan.



[X.iii.v.]

¶Where another spider and fly reasoned late
before to prove which side of both is most
honest, this said quarrelling spider and cocking
fly labour to prove which part of both is most
dishonest in words and deeds as usurpation in
windows and other misbehaviour. At end
whereof, in furious fumes thence runneth the
spider one way, and the fly flingeth another.

Cap. 44.



[X.iv.r.]

MASTERS (quoth the spider), without cir-
cumstance
At reasoning on which part most honesty lies,
Of spiders or of flies in continuance,

Your judgment both parts of like honesty tries.
Which honesty so tried, now contrariwise,
For a pithy purpose, let us here now see
On which side of both lieth most dishonesty.

Dishonesty? dare ye stir that? (quoth this fly)
What dishonesty know you by flies, sir,
More than flies know by spiders? Fly, what
know I?

Words and deeds such and so many will I stir,
As shall by dishonesty flies' honesty blur.
And first for words, honesty honestly to scan,
Honesty speaketh well. Yea (quoth the fly),
what then?

This, then (quoth the spider); take flies ten
thousand:

Wheresoever they flee, go, stand, lie, or sit,
Few of the number have taken upon hand
To give any good spider any good word yet,
Except in flattery, which words show every
whit

As much dishonesty in false fair semblance,
As showeth, in fury, foul words of more griev-
ance.

When flies, flocked together upon their ale
bench

Begin to hizz and bizz, in their kind of talk,
No lords, no laws, can their bizzing babble
quench.

And so many words, so many lies still walk.
If one devil with another for lies should calk,
They could never find the like. Oh (quoth the
fly)

Your mastership talketh wonderful honestly!

[X.iv.v.

If ye gave ear to yourself, ye might soon know,
Spider or fly, who speaketh most ill of us
twain.

Speak not spiders as ill of flies, as ye trow,
As flies speak of spiders? Yes, it showeth too
plain [pain.

Wherein these terms must we use upon great
When either of other part talk out of measure,
The knave fly railleth, master spider speaketh
his pleasure.

But grant dishonest words each part of other
Do speak alike much, which showeth like dis-
honesty

In both these parts, the t'one part to the
t'other.

Of flies' dishonest words, the cause is to see
The dishonest deeds of you spiders to be.

Example whereof, to prove this case most
clear, [pear.

Doth in this window (for all windows) ap-

All holes wherein being ours in common right,
Late commonly ours, now severally yours,
Look where ye set in foot, by right or by
might,

Like as the devil saith, so say you,—All is ours.
For as this window showeth your usurped
powers,

So in all windows, wheresoever ye come,
Ye grasp up all, and flies may say nought, but
mum.

Thus when we speak (I say) if our speech ill be,
Of your ill deeds come our ill words every one.
Do you none ill deeds to us, good sir? (quoth
he)

Yes, sir (quoth the fly), flies to spiders do one;
In our curtesy made to you down to ground
gone,

Most sinfully we commit idolatry,
For we therein worship false imagery.

[Y.i.r.—bb.

False imagery? (quoth he) ye are a false knave.
A right livery (quoth he) turned on the wrong
side.

But livery and wages that spiders vouchsafe
To give flies, of one substance are verified.
Knave up or take up, fly, thy wandering words
wide, [touch,

Truly to try how truth the touchstone may
On whose side most dishonesty is t'avouch.

All dishonest words in flies of spiders had,
Come of dishonest deeds in spiders to flies.
Thus sayest thou, which saying showeth thee
drunk or mad.

What ill or wrong deeds do we to you devise
Our own windows to use, as our own will
applies? [own,

Your deeds were not ill were all windows your
But no words save your own show windows so
known.

The tops and top-sides of all windows all yours,
We have granted and would grant, were ye
content

To grant likewise all holes in all windows ours;
But spiders must have all, ye may nought
relent,

And in your having all, mark th'experiment,
How the world before went, and since how it
goeth,

For commonwealth in spiders and in flies both.

When you in tops and sides there kept your
estate,
And we in the holes, as stood with our degree,
Spiders and flies in all windows situate,
Dwelt each by other in wealth and unity.
But since (like a sort of rake-hells as ye be)
Ye lift each at other, and all at us lift,
There is in you, nor us, either love or thrift.

But you, we, and our windows too, all go to
wrack
By your covetous cutthroats, the devil choke
ye! [back?
Wilt thou, wretch (quoth he), lay all this on our
Grown by our strifes, nay, fly and flies, I'll
yoke ye [ye.
With more than half part of the ill to smoke
It is and hath been said there's no good accord
In place whereas every knave will be a lord.

Which is terbox to your side: for out of doubt
Your cockapert pride and your covetous hearts
Have brought more than three parts of our ills
about.
Your rude rebellious disobedient parts
Much unto our (and much more to your own)
smarts,
Kicking and wincing at every good order,
Hath destroyed good order in every border.

Good order, lost by pride and covetousness,
In grant, but how lost by us? nay, lost by you.
Flies may be covetous, but as for riches,

Flies get none except here and there one
t'allow.

Yes (quoth the spider), many flies are rich now,
In occupying in windows under us,
By price of things raised there in foul overplus.

Where flies of spiders (by wrong, quoth he) are
driven

To hire our own, kept from us (we say) by
might, [given,

Fines, incomes and rents, so great and many
With such straight restraint of our accustomed
right, [quite.

That one of those, or all, eat up our gains
Which exact exactions in spiders began
Ere flies in sale of any wares from th'old rate
ran.

[Y.ii.r.

As I am true gentleman, thou list on us.

As ye are a true gentleman, even so I lie.

But as ye are a false gentleman to discuss

Your falsehood and my truth may join jollily.

I'll prove straight (quoth the spider) that thou
liest, I;

For rents and wares raised, thou sayest spiders
begun,

But mark how dishonestly that lie doth run.

Five foot to two in windows of this room

Ye flies hold yet in lease at unraised rent;

All holders whereof sell their wares as extreme

As though their farms at the most raised rent
went.

Now who beginneth here the first extort ex-
tent?

The flies (quoth the fly), but yet spiders begun

To raise rents before as leases did outrun.

And as leases fall still, so raise they rent still,
And still (of their goodness) will raise, I doubt
not.

In new leases of such covenants to fulfil
As the flies' gains no great privy tithes shall lot,
The lewd lords, their landlords, in reckoning
the shot,
The lot of allowance in both parts to lay,
The spiders have the cream, the flies have the
whey.

But spiders letting farms, and flies holding
farms,
Th'one letting farms high, th'other selling
victuals dear;
And of all ware sellers each shifteth from harms
By raising his ware, as other wares appear.
But all that on their pensions (or pence) live
mere
In windows, without land to let or ware to sell,
Wherever they dwell may think they dwell in
hell.

[Y.ii.v.
Well (quoth the spider), for leases not run out,
Fly farmers holding farms yet, as old rent
gave, [ing rout?
Why raise they their wares with th'other poll-
They take time (quoth the fly) while they the
time have;
For when your time cometh, you will so poll
and shave
By raised rents, turning head farmers to herds,
That they know ye will flit the fat from their
beards.

And ye high head spiders in a conspiracy
Conspire in all windows, to keep farms at
heith, [things high.
Or keep them in your own hands, to keep
Where a fly (quoth the spider) double rent
payeth, [sayeth :
More than he hath paid, there experience
Look what wares at what price that flies sold
before,
Those or worse wares he selleth for treble price
more.

So that if spiders raise rents, two pounds from
one, [wares straight;
Three pounds from one at least flies raise their
Their which robbery, hearing any rumour upon,
Of the fault on us spiders they lay the weight,
Roaring in raging how we our lands do height,
Making them beggars, when they with that
they win
Are able to purchase the farms they dwell in.

Well lied, well said ! (said the fly) I would have said.

But now to our ground, on which our saying
arose,

For dishonesty on both parts to be laid,
Covetous and pride being chief grounds in
gross,

To prove on which part most dishonesty goes ;
Dishonesty by covetousness doth rise,
At the least as much in spiders as in flies.

[Y.iii.r.

And as much in flies as in spiders, say I.
But what remedy, fly, to remove this grief?
Look they that list, they shall for me (quoth the
fly).

We talk not now of grief to devise relief
By honesty, but by dishonest mischief
To charge which part most dishonest we can
guess

In all ills, namely, pride and covetousness.

Wherein as we in covetousness have said,
Let us now each part appose other in pride,
The which vice, for both our sides uprightly
weighed,

Dishonesty therein shall be verified
To lie altogether on the spiders' side.
Spiders are of flies alway curtsey takers,
And flies to spiders alway curtsey makers.

And yet (I say) in bending our knees to fall,
Flies looking like lambs, spiders like lions
look, [all,
As though poor flies were made for rich spiders
Of which, though foolish flies the suffrance
may brook, [book
Wise flies cannot brook it, for they find in
This demand written, When Adam dolve and
Eve span,

Who was, in those golden days, a gentleman?

None, as who say. And were there none now
(say we)

The world should be as good now as it was
then.

If yeomen flies were put in authority,
We would rule as well as spiders gentlemen.
Shall Jack sauce rule now, fly? Sir, by these
bones ten,

We shall sure be ruled in all kinds of laws
As well by Jack sauce, as by master John
daws.

[Y.iii.v.]

What wit or what wealth winneth your estate
 stout, [do nought.
 Look highly, speak lordly, command all, and
 Gay gear, goodly cobwebs, to revel with the
 rout,
 Without any households for the poor flies
 wrought.
 But with dishes dainty far fetched and dear
 bought.
 One fat spider another feedeth in fine feast,
 More to set out himself, than to feast his guest.

These proud peacock's properties wholly remain
 In you proud spiders, and not in us poor flies;
 But most proud, most fool, as flies' proverbs
 contain.
 Flies (quoth the spider) in their proud exercise,
 Are too far unlike lords, lords' looks t'enter-
 prise;
 Lordlike to look, flies' countenance cannot
 brook;
 But though flies look not lordlike, knavelike
 they look.

Shall we not find a knave fly, not worth two
 straws,
 Look more proudly than the best lord in a shire?
 Yes, and take upon him, in chop logic laws,
 To control us and our households far and near.
 So that by pride, less dishonesty showeth here
 In lordly looks of spiders' lordlike bravery,
 Than in flies' knavish deeds, by knavelike
 knavery.

Of which sort of false malapert minions,
 Thou art captain, caitiff, against us to kick.
 And sure thou holdest perilous opinions;
 Were thou opposed pithily to the quick,
 I durst lay my life thou art an heretic.
 I defy (quoth the fly) the wretch that so saith.
 Hark! I will even in your ear confess my faith.

[Y.*iv.r.*

The fly, blowing awhile in the spider's ear,
 The spider that while breathing in the fly's
 neck, [spear;
 Both cried out, as they had been stung on a
 I am killed! (quoth the spider), death cometh at
 beck!

This fly hath blown fly-blows in mine ear a
 peck. [the road!
 I am poisoned (quoth the fly), death rideth in
 This spider's breath maketh me swell like a
 toad!

Triacle, cried th'one! An ear pick, cried
 th'other!

The fly flew, the spider crept, quite out of sight.
 The fly flung one way, the spider ran another;
 Fume of fiery fury in both was seen right.
 But both being anon gone out of sight quite,
 Th'ant, in reproach of their communication,
 Told them all part of his imagination.

[The tail-piece as on p. 28 is here given in
 original.]

[Y.iv.v.

¶After a few words, which th'ant speaketh to the rest of both sorts there, they are assigned to stand back again, while th'arbiters gather out of this railing such reason as they can.

Cap. 45.



[Z.i.v.—cc.

IT is commonly said, and commonly seen,
Whereas any number of any sort be,
Of all sorts there be, and evermore have been;
And as in most base sort some right good we
see,
So in the best sort as ill to decree.
Example whereof no better proof ensureth,
In no one example, than this one procureth.

Of you, both sorts spiders and flies, present
here,

You use yourselves honestly, many and most;
But yet thereto see we that here doth appear
On each one side one so brimly brag and boast,
That they prove on both sides some knaves in
the cost:

I mean these twain gone, whom upon inquir-
ing,
Are, in honest audience, not worth the hearing.

Forsooth (said a sober spider), even indeed
They are unworthy hearing in any place.
True (quoth a wise fly), but since it was agreed
By common counsels on both sides to purchase
Or provide them to join with us in this case,
It seemeth unseemly for us to reject
Such as our electors to us have elect.

It seemeth so (said the ant) and I take it so.
Brother butterfly, will ye that they depart,
While we twain to groping of this matter go?
Yea, master ant (quoth he), with all my heart.
They all (once again) from them twain revart,
While they two devise some way of availing
To gather right reason out of rude railing.

[Z.i.v.]

¶Th'arbiter considers in this taunting talk, that sundry dishonest abuses there are in sundry parties on both sides. Upon their agreement of conclusion wherein, they have before them those other spiders and flies again. Cap. 46.



[Z.ii.r.]

TO pass this last case (quoth th'ant) as in
award,
Which part is most dishonest, the case erst
weighed,
Reasoning which is most honest part to regard,

Is a plain plat to prove this likewise laid.
 As honesty there is equally displayed,
 To show the t'one part as honest as the t'other,
 So show both here like dishonest, th'one and
 th'other.

What kinds of faults we may in the spiders
 find,
 The same (or the like) we may find in the flies ;
 So that (I say) as equity hath assigned,
 One degree of dishonesty in both lies. [tries
 Where our former talk (quoth the butterfly)
 The honesty one in both the sides, yet ye know
 That honesty in the flies shineth most in show.

For that (which I told you I would in mind
 bear)

Flies far more in number than spiders appear.
 True (quoth th'ant), and as most number win-
 neth flies there

Most show of honesty, so most number here
 Most show of dishonesty showeth in flies clear.
 As most number of the honest shine most in
 fame,

Most number of dishonest shine most in shame.

Then (quoth the butterfly) as flies here nought
 get,
 So lose they nought, wherein let us be content
 To set the hare's head against the goose's
 gible.

Both sides to adjudge like honest I assent.
 And I (quoth the ant) do give the same judg-
 ment.

Hereupon they called all again to stand near,
 To whom wherein th'ant declared as ensueth
 here.

[Z.ii.v.]

¶Th'anſ declareth in thoſe ſpiders and flies,
 that the tales of the pert ſpider and fly before
 told do charge each other's part in ſuch ſort
 that they cannot ſay which ſide is moſt diſ-
 honeſt; but they two adjudge clearly in diſ-
 honeſt things both ſides of like diſhoneſty.
 Wherewith they all avoided back again, th'ar-
 biters talk to fall to a point between themſelves
 what report finally and fully to make.

Cap. 47.



[Z.iii.v.]

ALTHOUGH the railing of thoſe railers
 late gone [thought,
 For itſelf or themſelves, unmeet may be
 Either to be talked upon or thought upon,

Yet since the matter of their talk such talk
brought [wrought,
That as one ground of our talk, talk hath it
We have wrought thereto considerate consent,
To conclude therein this extended extent.

Dishonesty in spiders and in flies both
Appeareth approved so indifferently,
That on which side the most dishonesty goeth
We cannot know nor otherwise verify,
But like dishonesty on both sides doth lie.
So that out of hand to declare our decree,
Both part in dishonesty have one degree. *f*

But forasmuch as dishonesty here touched
Was to prove or disprove honesty before,
Which part of both most or least honesty
avouched,
And that dishonesty doth decide no more
Than honesty did, leave dishonesty's lore;
And by former talk in honesty alone,
Take honesty on both parts here, judged one.

The grave number on both sides agreed to this.
Whereupon th'ant asked who had further to
say
Concerning evidence in the premisses.
They all said they had to say no further, they.
Well, said they both, ye all yet again away.
Which done, they both each to other their
minds brake,
What end (now at end) they finally might take.

[Z.iii.v.
¶Th'arbiters being agreed on their report, they
call to them again the spiders and the flies.

Cap. 48.



[Z.iv.r.
BROTHER butterfly (quoth th'ant), how
think ye now?
What maketh all this evidence for either side?
All alike for both (quoth he), now how say you?
I say the same (quoth th'ant) wherein is speci-
fied
Too hard a trial to judge the best side tried,
The best side of both, since doubt hath thus
drowned it,
Let's at last leave it as we at first found it.

Agreed (quoth the butterfly), by my good sooth.
They herewith called again the spiders and
flies,
Each hoping to hear a tale for his own tooth.
But th'ant being (for an ant) learned and wise,
Otherwise weighing, otherwise did devise
Of this process passed, whereto report the pith;
For which (unto them all) he made way forth-
with.



[Z.iv.v.
¶Th'ant showeth them that the butterfly and he
are at point what to report, devising it to be re-
ported before the head spider and the fly in the
cobweb, the two principal parties, and to have
with them to hear and witness their report, two
spiders and two flies, witty and discreet, and
the rest to stay there till their return. Which
being agreed, they set forth straight to the
said cobweb.

Cap. 49.



[Aa.i.r.—dd.
K NOW ye all that we two being full agreed
What we shall say, we must now full agree
Where we shall say; which saying must be de-
creed

Before those two that did us two decree
As friends of trust in this authority.
The spider and fly (mean I) which two are
Chief grounds in the case that we must now
declare.

The butterfly and all the rest there said
For that report that was the place most fit.
Let us, with us (quoth th'ant), have forth in aid
Two spiders and two flies of credence and wit,
And all the rest till our return here to sit.
They two with the two two's following in order,
Passed on till they came to the cobweb's
border.

The fly in cobweb stood up, and prayer left,
Longing for meed of prayer prayed ere then
With deadly look, as death had life bereft.
But when the spider into place came then,
Alas! poor fly, how he looked pale and wan.
All those without, unto the spider within,
At their low curtsey done, th'ant did thus begin.



[Aa.i.v.

¶The ant associate with the said sort pronounceth at length (to the spider and fly in the cobweb) this brief effect, that inasmuch as on both sides the evidence is one, and that the credence is one, by the honesty being one, they



two can (in reason) no way try how to lay th'accustomed right more on th'one side than on th'other. They finally leave the case even at liberty, as they found it, and so depart to the place of arbitrament again.

Cap. 50.

[Aa.ii.r.]

MY great good uncle, and little good friend
fly,

Where you two chose us two your arbiters late,
To adjudge (by reason) the custom rightly
Of spiders and flies, in all windows situate,
Which part should have all, or what part we
should rate

To either part, what hath thereon risen sith,
And what in fine for fine doth rise, hear the pith.

In the first talk between you twain and us
twain,

Th'issue to try was (as ye said unto us),
How right in all windows (I say) doth remain
To both sides, as reason may custom discuss,
You, for you and all spiders, alleging thus—
All parts in all windows (none except) said ye,
Are yours and all spiders', as in tenure free.

Wherein you fly (as ye then affirmed) held,
All holes in all windows are flies' free of old,
Tops and sides being spiders' hold free, to build
Head houses or tenantries or what ye would.
So that for the holes only is all the hold;
Which (upon further evidence to consider)
We (as ye willed us to go) went together

Where spiders and flies, a certain number met,
Before appointed, evidence to disclose;
And first for all spiders, one to us there set,
Said;—As report of spiders hath gone and
goes,

All holes in all windows are theirs to dispose.
The flies then called, one fly for all verified,
All holes, by all flies' words, belong to flies'
side.

[Aa.ii.v.]

These two in their two tales showing difference
 none,
 In matter nor in words, save only that they
 Laid the same each on the side he standeth
 upon,
 They both and they all strangers to us to say
 This one sentence in which of both sides to lay,
 Both showing alike credible, to us too;
 That was thing difficult for us two to do.

Whereupon both parties (before us both) called
 we,
 To try on which part most credence might ap-
 pear,
 Wherein one spider and one fly of gravity,
 Reasoning on which side most credence should
 show here,
 They both at last granted this, for a ground
 clear,—
 As every wight's count in honesty doth mount,
 So every wight's credence amounteth in ac-
 count.

For honesty agreed they to be the ground
 (Or grounded cause) of credence. Then were
 we driven
 To search on which side most honesty was
 found,
 Wherein (on both sides) when all reasons were
 given, [even.]
 The honesty on both sides in our judgment was
 And so for credence (it on honesty growing),
 One honesty, one credence in both parties show-
 ing.

Thus their evidence being one, whereunto
Their credence one, by being of honesty one,
To try the wrongdoers, which we came to do,
What way can we (in reason) take? forsooth
none.

Wherein lacking power, since our goodwill
alone [charge,
Can do nought honestly this charge to dis-
As we this case found here, we leave here, at
large.

[*Aa.iii.r.*

Friend butterfly (said the spider), how say you?
As master ant hath said (said he) so say I.

Then (quoth the spider) with thanks to you
both now,
We both discharge you. Sir (quoth the butter-
fly),

My poor kinsfly here that in durance doth lie,
For charge or discharge in every condition,
I beseech your mastership handle him with
'scretion.

I will (quoth the spider) use him no worse
Than standeth with reason, law, custom, and
conscience.

If (quoth the fly) those granted grounds not
reverse,

As, till I see them reversed, in experience
I see no cause to conceive lack of credence,
Then shall I (and all flies) laud your equity,
Undoubtful trust whereof much comforteth me.

Fear not that, fly (quoth he). And the fly (of
truth)

From dangerous dread that he drooped in ear,
Hopeth now in hope, as all outward show
showeth;

But yet for all th'outward brag that he did bear,
Methought he seemed inwardly not without
fear,

Lest fair faithful promise of present pleasance
Might have foul faithless displeasing perform-
ance.

But between hope and dread he lying there still,
Th'ant and butterfly, the four spiders and flies,
Took leave and departed the same place until
That they last came from, where their company
lies;

To repeat their doing in this compromise,
The spider in cobweb gone that to declare,
In th'upper part of his house, where his flock
are.

[Aa.iii.v.
¶Th'ant and butterfly, sat where they had sat,
th'ant repeateth to those spiders and flies the
report made by him at the said cobweb. At end
whereof the spiders and flies, seeing that time
spent all in vain, each side among themselves
fall in murmuring. Cap. 51.



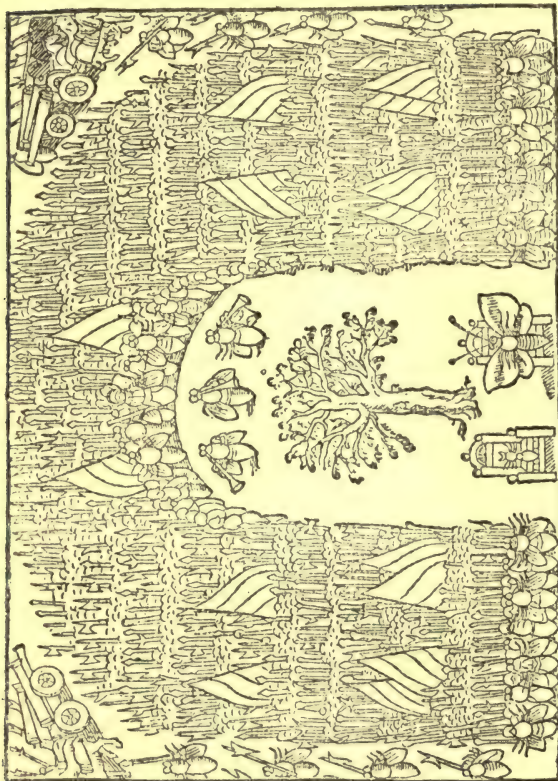
[Aa.iv.r.
TH'ANT and butterfly, set where they erst
had sat,
Those spiders and flies standing where they erst
stood,
Th'ant repeating this, they perceiving in it

Much time spent on all parts and no part take
good,
They began generally to change their mood.
The spiders together clustering and cluttering,
The flies together in murmuring muttering.



¶ Upon the spiders and the flies muttering, murmuring, suddenly there come nigh about them a wonderful number of all manner of flies in their warlike manner. Whereat with twink of an eye (as it were) the head spider (with a great number of spiders) hath builded a strong castle in that cobweb, with ordnance and weapons and spiders ready in order of defence.

Cap. 52.



[At this point the regularity of the signatures in the 1556 edition is interrupted. Before Bb.i.v. three gatherings of four leaves occur (=12 leaves=24 pages). Obviously this was to provide for the full-page illustra-

[—ee.



tions introduced for the first time in this edition. The supplementary signatures are given as they occur in the original: see Note-Book.]

HEREWITH (even suddenly, at twink of
an eye).
Came such a flight of flies in scattered array,
As shadowed the sun from th'earth to the sky.
No kind of fly alive but was there that day.
Tag and rag, like lions raging now rage they;
Flesh flies, butterflies, land flies, water flies,
Bees, humblebees, wasps, hornets, gnats of all
size.

The grand Captain, standing amid among this
rout, [told;
Was the fly that flang from thence in fury erst
Seldom hath been seen such a sort, and all so
stout,
Except here and there one, temperate to behold;
Staves, bats, clubs, pitchforks, most beggarly,
most bold.
Wherewith the spiders that erst gave evidence,
In the cobweb took sanctuary for defence.

Where, whether this proud spider gave word
before,
Who with that pert fly had before there prated,
Or that spiders of ordinary have store
Of all munition for wars ready rated,
I wot not; but without more time delated,
Ordnance of all sorts round the cobweb was
laid,
And all spiders with all weapons pressed in aid.

Daggs, handguns, hakes, arquebusses, cul-
verins, flings,
Potguns, sakers, cannons, double and demy,
Field pieces, of all suits, with all belonging
things,

Bills, bows, partisans, pikes, to push far or
 nigh;
 And to occupy all, spiders placed aptly,
 Each of them harnessed meet for his property,
 The rest all in bright harness *cap-à-pie*.

The flies of all ordnance were not destitute,
 Nor furnished like as the spiders were;
 Rusty rotten pieces, their terror to bruit,
 They shot off, and shot wide of marks every
 where.

Drums, fifes, flags, and whiffers, none wanted
 there;

Banners displayed on both sides all arms bear-
 ing, [ing.

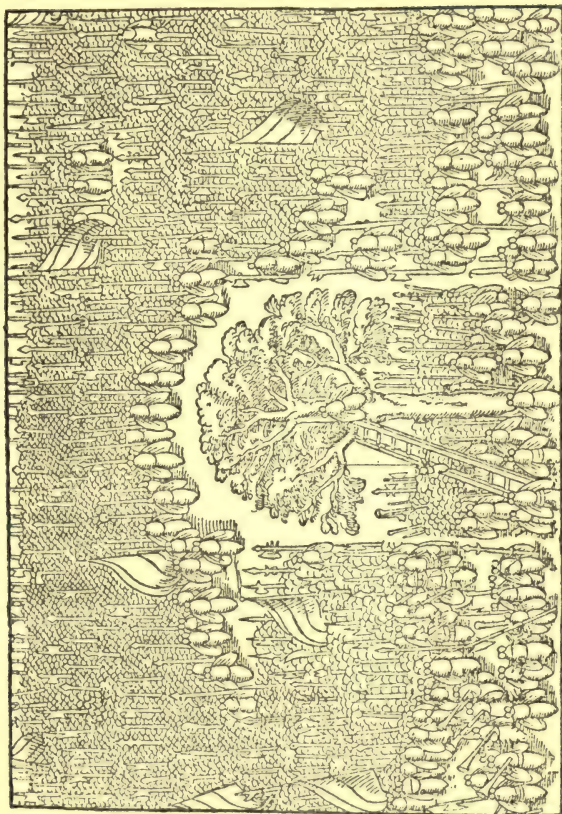
In heralds' books avowed for both sides wear-

The flies, in number above the spiders far,
 The spiders, in order far better than they,
 The flies will adventure to make or to mar;
 The spiders (not suddenly) soberly weigh
 To defend or offend the flies as they may.
 The spiders in cobweb will bide this jeopardy;
 The flies in field will besiege them at liberty.

[The tail-piece as on p. 38 is here given in
 original.]

¶ This huge heap of flies light about th'arbiters,
 apprehending th'ant, casting a halter about his
 neck, drawing him to their tree of reformation
 (as they call it) to hang him straight. But at
 his suit to be heard speak ere he die, one fly
 fleeth into the tree, wherewith the captain com-
 mandeth silence.

Cap. 53.



[The plate as on p. 220 is here repeated in
original.]

THIS innumerable flock of flies are now
 Marched unto th'arbiters, and, they there
 lighted, [vow
 They took th'ant prisoner with an unadvised
 To spite the spiders, who had flies long spited,
 That he should straight be hanged, and then in-
 dicted
 Of felony against flies as an adherent
 To spiders, in their usurpation urgent.

Hang him up (quoth one) with wild words and
wide wit, [where,
A false wretch he is, and well known every-
And would be known nowhere, wherever he flit.
He hath two names; one name here, another
there;
In this place called ant, in that place called pis-
mire;
And one suspected varlet two names to have
Is (in common judgment) judged a false knave.

Then stepped forth a sort of fell flies, furiously,
Who, having cast a halter about th'ant's neck,
To their tree of reformation standing by
They felly forced him, with many a churlish
check,

A ladder to that tree was set at a beck, [tied :
Where he in haste hauled up, and the halter
Turn the thief off the ladder, thousands cried.

Small was the marvel though th'ant were much
abashed
To see this sore sudden importable chance;
Who liveth in nature but he must be dashed
Both out of courage and out of countenance,
That should straight be dashed out of continu-
ance,

When none (or few), being forewarned of
 death's hour, [shower.
 Can evenly bear feeling thought of that sharp
 [Aa.v.r.

Right now in worship set high, as a judge,
 Even now, standing in shame to be hangéd
 It was to him a feeling grief of grudge, [high,
 Unknown to all that have not feelingly
 Felt of the same in their experiency;
 His look and hue now and late so unlike,
 That to the heart a Jew that sight must strike.

In which agony, calling to him his wit,
 One wise fly, at all former talk present,
 Seeming with all flies present in good credit,
 He prayed to persuade all there to be content
 To hear him speak, ere he his life should relent.
 But reason (quoth that fly); and therewithal he,
 To get th'ant that grace, gat him in to that
 tree.

The fly there bent to speak, the captain grand,
 By mouth of an herald at trumpet sound,
 In proclamation did silence straight command.
 Whereat, a few words here and there in ears
 round, [drowned;
 To hear that fly speak their speech was all
 Whereupon the captain, bidding that fly say,
 These or these like few words, he said straight-
 way.

[The tail-piece as on p. 234 is here given in
 original.]

¶The fly in the tree, to persuade the flies to hear
 the ant speak, wadeth honestly, politicly to
 allure them to quiet hearing of the ant before
 they put him to death. His which tale told, he
 removeth to his place again. Cap. 54.



[The plate as on p. 220 is here given in original.]

BROTHERS and brotherly friends all, I
doubt not
Ye know me a fly, and take me such a fly
As for ant, or spider, in anywhat
Will not be false to the flock that naturally
I ought to be true unto to live or die;
For this ant and all ants what I shall say now
Shall approve me none of them, but one of you.

Of whom each one another myself to say,
And each one to other (I hope) likewise knit,
Let us all as one, entering this one journey,
Enter the path as we may pass through it;
One deep induction whereto, judged in my wit,
Is to flee rash deeds rashly done here, for such
Have undone all, in our like case, very much.

One of which dangerous deeds (under correction),
We do in this deed, th'ant thus to death to draw
Without accusation or detection
Whereby might appear any colour of law
To kill him; this lo! doth my conscience gnaw.
And yet more; the number here in ire so stirred,
That they would have him hanged, and not
speak one word.

Which deed if we do, where are our like monsters?

First to apprehend an ant undetected
By any colour that any word consturs,
To be either detected or suspected,
And not only straight unto death directed,
But die, not suffered to speak; defame of us
That perpetual trump will blow in shame of us.

Wherefore for us (and not for him), as I said,
I sue to you, as he hath sued to me
To hear him speak; which speech of you heard
and weighed,
As you shall be agreed, so shall I agree
To hang him or save him, as we cause shall see.
This tale thus told, down the fly again flitteth,
And where he erst did sit, there he again sitteth.



*¶The fly's former fine tale no whit stirreth the
gross flies to the hearing of the ant. Where-
upon the butterfly (that was an arbiter) fleeth
into the tree, labouring the flies to have the
ant heard speak ere he die.* Cap. 55.

[The plate as on p. 223 is here given in
original.]

[The plate as on p. 220 is here given in
original.]

WITH this a chirm in murmuring there fell
Amongst them all, they in flocks flocking
anon,

Here and there a flock, like sort to like to tell
Their minds, and some praised, some dis-
praised the tale gone.

This tale showeth this fly honest and wise (saith
one);

He is a false flattering fly (saith another);

He said well, but he meant ill (said some other).

Th'ant hath bribed him (quoth one); he is cor-
rupt sure.

An ant bribe a fly? (quoth another) wherewith?

With one of his eggs? that is a sore allure

To tempt a fly! Nay (quoth one), this is the
pith:

He is a spy for the spiders, I see even sith.

I heard no word (quoth one) to suspect him by.

(Quoth one) All his words sound suspiciously.

So many heads, so many wits there were seen.

The honest flies that fly's tale honestly did
brook;

The contrary, took his tale contrary clean.

I heard by some flies' words, and saw by their
look,

That th'ill sort the good sort against their wills
took.

Good flies would have suffered and have sit
even still

Rather than have risen, by force of th'ill.

But forth he must (they say) that the devil doth
drive;

Things are not wrought by wisdom in such a
rout; [trive,

Will, and not wisdom, must such matters con-

All surety of safety to bring in a doubt,

Or to set safety undoubtedly quite out;

In which safety such flies as sat fast before,

Must leave hold to take hold on contrary shore.

They being now driven, they must do as they
shall, [Aa.vi.r.

And not as they would, and for this case in
hand, [all.

Hang the ant forthwith! cried the most number

The blunt butterfly, that arbiter had stand,

Whipped into the tree as fierce as a fire brand,

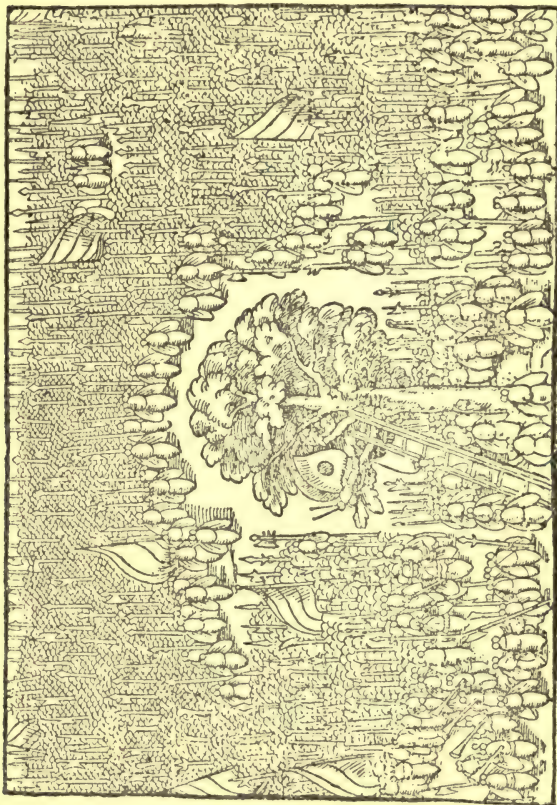
And at silence had upon the trumpet's blast,

He must blow his blast, or else his heart must
brast.

[The tail-piece as on p. 28 is here given in
original.]

¶The butterfly (to get th'ant to be heard)
telleth his tale in such rude manner and matter,
that anon he setteth them all (well nigh) to-
gether by the ears. But upon his gross tale
grossly told (much more liked than the fly's
finer tale) they grant to hear the ant speak.

Cap. 56.



[The plate as on p. 220 is here given in
original.]

[gg.

Weigh it quickly, and your minds therein out-
blow.

Down he flew : whereupon the flies said they
would [told.

Hear th'ant speak. And thereupon this tale he



¶The ant prayeth to be heard speak thoroughly before any part of his tale be adjudged, and then they to adjudge the whole as standeth with equity. First alleging better to clear himself from offending the flies ; finally giving them (as it seemeth) friendly counsel (touching this strife), groundeth upon this common saying : Before thou aught begin, have an eye to the end.

Cap. 57.

[The plate as on p. 223 is here given in
original.]

[The plate as on p. 220 is here given in
original.]

MY masters, flies here all in general,
And each one particularly I humbly pray,
What things I shall touch, general or special,
To take to the best. And first that I may,
As remembrancer of your remembrance, lay
One special mean forth here remembered to be,
Drawing hearers in all things to equity.

And equity in all things to give or to take
(Among other virtues) is a virtue pure;
Inequity, for wrong, no way can make
Where equity is set and settled sure;
For equity in no wise may endure
Balance, to any one side cast or driven;
Equity equally keepeth the balance even.

Which mean for which equity to be obtained,
Is that hearers, in hearing this my case,
See that definitive judgment be refrained,
In any part thereof to take any place
Till the whole be heard; which hearing to
purchase,
Is my great suit, beseeching all to suspend
Judgment in every part till all parts take end.

First for me, next for you and me, last for you,
I sue to be heard. And first for me, mark all.
From all offence by me done to you here now,
Since I came in this case that doth here fall,
I am cleared by one unsuspect for partial;
I mean that worshipful master butterfly,
Who trieth me to have dealt here indifferently.

He cleareth me since I came; and before I
came,
If any fly (justly) to my charge can lay
In anything weighing the weight of a dram,

By word or deed, either open or privy,
That ever I hurt fly any manner way,
Then let my punishment here be so ample
That all ants may thereby take an example.

But being clear since I came, and, more t'avow,
Being clear till I came from word and deed ill,
Alas ! why will ye kill me, who hurteth not you,
Nor never did hurt you, nor never will,
Nor never can, though will would ill fulfil?
This for myself, as for myself proved,
I hope myself sure from harm by you moved.

Secondly, for you and me both, this mean I,—
If ye draw the blood of me (thus innocent),
As the loss is small, so naught win ye thereby,
But (as is said) infamy of endless extent;
Which pain from me and shame from you to prevent,

The safe salve for both sides is this to decree,
Save you my life, and that saveth your honesty.

Third and last point, naught for me, all for you,

Proving me not only you no whit to hate,
But much to love, a tale I'll tell and a vow,
Which you hearing and following in steady state,

Shall steadily stay you from harm in debate
That hangeth over your heads much more than ye see,

Wherein for you, and not for me, (I say) hear me.

Among many precepts philosophical
Given to all persons to take profit by,
For time, place, and case present, above all

One serveth in sentence most singularly.
The words short, the matter long, the reason
high; [pend—
Which words and matter on these words do de-
Ere thou aught begin, have an eye to the end.

This pure precept, as all oft in words say it,
If all did do it, in effectual deed,
So that our deeds did it as our words weigh it,
Oh, what commodity thereby should proceed!
Our full felicity should thereupon breed,
As contrarily breedeth in contrary show,
Infelicity, as we feelingly know.

Who would begin a fray and his foe therein kill
If he looked to th'end, that should hang him
therefore?

I ween all the world should be kept from all ill
Kept we this lesson well in practised lore,
To th'end of beginning to look evermore
Before we begin, for when we have begun
The leaving off lightly is not lightly won.

Small things begun, without looking to their
end,

Some oft to ill end, great loss, and jeopardy;
Great things begun then none eye on th'end
t'attend,

At (or ere) their beginning we must agree
To be our much more discommodity.

As things greater and smaller differ in size,
So differeth here discommodity likewise.

[Bb.i.r.—hh.

And of all our great things no one of more
weight,

Nor thereby more meet th'end therein to weigh
At beginning, than is that bitter bait

Of wretched war, the very lock and key
That latcheth and locketh us all from quiet stay.
Who that (in rash roof) beginneth to contend,
He repenteth beginning ere he come to end.

It is a thing right far beyond an ant's reach
To blaze the plat of poison generally
Set abroach by war; but short some to fetch,
War's harm and good stand both unspeakably;
Both are (I say) unspeakable; for why?
War hath done more harm than tale of tongue
can hold;
War hath done no good, and naught cannot be
told.

War hath wrought such woe that all flies com-
monly
And spiders eke, of which two sorts I speak,
Having in all times had experiency
Of rash beginning of war, the peace to break,
They seeing (in their war) their winning weak,
Would lose half the good they had to peace to
fall
Rather than jeopard in war goods, life, and all,

And of both sorts in this case, wearied in war,
Flies have had ever cause to mislike war most;
When spiders and flies have fallen at this like
jar, [right boast,
For quarrels, wherein flies might most their
Whoever had the right, the flies the field lost.
To one score spiders slain, flies slain twenty
score,
And much of their offspring lost for evermore.

Which showeth (as spiders call it) that no sedition
[Bb.i.v.]

Can have good success in flies inferior
 By stubborn war, but by humble petition :
 For thing interior, or exterior
 Flies must sue to the spider superior.
 They take this as a full hold not to be remiss'd ;
 Wellframed flies will suffer and not resist.

Flies wrecks in wars in time passed, if flies re-
 volve [been,
 How spiders' cobwebs flies' sepulchres have
 Your wise quiet retire shall this war dissolve.
 But if smart of time passed be forgotten clean,
 Cast eye to peril at eye presently seen ;
 View yonder cobweb castle with indifferent eye,
 And mark whether ye be matched indifferently.

Behold the battlements in every loop
 How th'ordnance lieth flies far and near to
 fatch ; [group
 Behold how every piece that lieth there in
 Hath a spider gunner with ready fired match ;
 Behold on the walls spiders waking ware
 watch ;

The watch spider in the tower alarum to strike
 At approach of any number showing warlike.

See th'impregnable fort, in every border
 How every spider with his weapon doth stand,
 So thoroughly harnessed, in so good order,
 The capital spider with weapon in hand.
 For that sort of soldiers, so manfully manned
 With cobwebs like casting nets all flies to quell,
 My heart shaketh at the sight ; behold, it is
 hell !

[Bb.ii.r.]

Against whole strength there, your weakness
here behold ;

Some have harness, most have none, all out of
'ray ;

Captains practised politic and bold

Few or none have ye this army to convey,

But each in other's neck, as sheep start astray.

Ordnance meet for the ship ye bring to the
field ;

But force without order winneth victory seld.

And put case that of you forty thousand flies

Thirty thousand shall 'scape, and his window
win,

Yet if each one of you in himself surmise

That he shall be one that shall die entering in,

What one fly (of all flies) will th'assault begin ?

No one, but that one that from home now come

Shall think himself wisest, that soonest goeth
home.

But to die all and in this window nought gain,

Of that said practice of time past assureth ye.

To venture life and suffer death are things
twain.

Venturing of life, t'obtain right, oft see we ;

But to venture life where death hath certain-
ty,—

For these kinds of right to die while ye may
live,

No wise fly will, but right rather overgive.

But if your harms of time passed be forgotten,

Warning of present harms at present time take ;

Of which two measures if none may be moten,

Time passed, nor time present (of which two I
 spake), [make,
 Let the third, time to come, be mean th'end to
 Weighing that in time to come the end must
 come
 To one end of four, which follow here in some.

[Bb.ii.v.]

After this war begun, either both parts shall
 Take end with condition as both parts can
 'gree,
 Or continue in war time perpetual,
 Or the flies (by the spiders) conquered shall be,
 Or the spiders conquered by the flies. Now see
 How in each one end of these four shall arise
 Painful perilous penuries to all flies.

First, if ye, after a time had in conflict
 Take end with the spider by composition,
 Beside the flies that to death shall be addicted
 The survivors shall receive such condition
 At the spiders' hand as the distribution
 Shall make flies at end bid fie on their winning,
 And after that end repent their beginning.

Second, this war continuing continually,
 Every year, month, week, day, hour, every
 minute,
 Many flies shall die, and all may fear to die.
 What fly can be sure one hour's life t'execute
 At points of all weapons, ever had in pursuit
 In undoubted death and doubtful deadly life?
 This end showeth small difference, where reason
 is rife.

And then to judge me by equity equally.
Whereunto for hearing in this case sued I,
First for me, next for you and me, last for you,
Of which process abridged, brief pith approach-
eth now.

For me, the flies' and butterflies' tales I
weighed
To my discharge, since I came of all offence
And before I came, my discharge myself laid :
Wherein my case being guiltless innocence,
For you and me, both in reason and conscience,
To save both sides upright, this counsel I gave,
You to save my life, your honesty to save.

[Bb.iii.v.

For you and not me, in your present quarrel,
On this principle my whole talk did depend—
Ere we aught begin, namely, thing of peril,
Wisdom willeth us to have an eye to the end.
In perilous quarrel's case to contend
Chiefly this : in time past, present, and to come,
How ye sped, and be like to speed, I showed
the sum.

But to end at beginning : you casting eye
At this poor counsel of poor Antony ant,
Of shape and good wit small, of good-will
great and high,
I shall rejoice, hoping here shall be no want
Of equity, in my discharge this instant,
Which I humbly pray. And so to end to fall,
I say no more, but the great God save you all.

This done, a noise began of such a huzzing,
Each one fly blowing in another fly's ear,
As if ten millions of flies had been buzzing ;

And all by this tale so astonished in fear,
That most of them their weapons could scantly
bear.

Th'ant's persuasions, in dread of death, struck
them so, [go!
That hundreds cried out, Home again let us

With this monster grand captain, the great
bragger,

Was much amazed and vengeably vexed,
To see these flies now so unsteadily stagger,
So late so ready to bring their foes perplexed.
This time (thought he) should give warning to
the next;

If he 'scaped this, at all times to beware
With faint fond flies to fisk again a warfare.

[Bb.iv.r.

¶ He began to cast that in common known
guise

In all like tumults that flies do thus procure,
Of simple flies most are pardoned that thus rise,
But captain flies (as he is now) are hanged sure;
Of which present danger to put delay in' ure
He wound into that tree, and silence won
The flies t'encourage again, thus he begun.

[The tail-piece as on p. 154 is here given in the
original.]

¶ Th'ant hath set the flies in such fear of the
spiders, that most are ready to run away.
Whom to stay, the captain fly deviseth th'ant
to set the spiders in like fear of them by a tale
told on the same ground that he told this, in
pain of hanging at his return. Cap. 58.

[The plate as on p. 226 is here given in
original.]

[The plate as on p. 220 is here given in
original.] [ii.]

SIRS, I see well this tale of this ant here
told,
To pass this seen peril, putteth you in such
dread,
That many are minded to leave off their hold,
As though leaving off now should your safe-
guard breed.
As it should not, nor for that it should indeed
His tale is told no whit, but all told for this,—
To save himself, and those spiders, friends of
his.

He seeth what and why he saith, which you see
not.

He foreseeeth if fear drive us to run away,
That we shall not only lose this window plat,
But in fleeing, like fleas killed in chase from
ray. [day]

Which shall be (he knoweth well) our leisureless
To be jailors to ants, and he thereupon
(Being his own jailor) breaketh jail and is gone.

This way our enemies win all, and we lose all;
They laugh, and we weep; they live, and we
die;

They in fame, we in shame perpetual.
And without cost, pain, or danger, by and by,
This ant at liberty, immediately.

Thus, where th'ant's words show him to be your
great friend,

Pith of th'ant's words prove him to be your
great fiend.

Some clarks (of whom this little ant not least
clark)
Can fine lies as finely as fine true tales tell;
Right side or wrong side, they can turn in each
work,
And make flies take either side true as gospel.
Which turn in this tale to appear in sequel,
I have devised a way (having your consent);
Hear it, and speak to it as your breasts are
bent.

As this ant clarkly (or craftily here)
Hath cast many mazing mists before your eyes,
Of much dread by much danger here to appear,
So upon his life or death, let him devise
Upon the same ground that your fear doth
arise, [dreads
A speech to the spiders, to show what deep
He can draw or drive into their hearts and
heads.

Which ground is this,—ere any wight aught
begin,
Have an eye to th'end the wise wight sayeth
(sayeth he),
Wherein (to match the fear that you be now in),
If he bring spiders in as much fear of ye
As he hath brought you in fear of them to be,
Then at return pardon him, goods, life, and
land;
Which if ye do not, then hang him out of hand.
Be it so, cried all. Then said this one that all
leads, [stands;
Choose forty flies to guard this ant that here
Twenty whose hands we trust more than their
heads;

And twenty whose heads we trust more than
 their hands;
 All of heart trusty, both power and policy
 bands; [these
 And for fear of false measures among all
 Send some that somewhat leave behind, loth
 to lose.

This said, and th'ant sworn his best here to
 be bent,
 An herald with trumpet and truce banner
 'splayed,
 For their safe conduct to the spider they sent.
 The spider warned watch to see their coming
 stayed.
 It should (to his honour) be reproach, he said,
 To treat with traitors in order of arms,
 But of grace he granteth them to come without
 harms.

The herald and that rest to the captain fly
 And all flies, the spider's pleasure did declare;
 Wherewith, to guard th'ant, they chose out
 flies forty,
 Whom while they were choosing, one couple
 there,
 Two flies of busy wit, as sundry flies are,
 Fell to divining by conjecture to show,
 What should in this message, and messenger,
 grow.

How sayst thou, my friend (quoth th'one fly)
 to this gear?
 What wouldst thou give to have the ant's office
 now?
 Give (quoth th'other fly) not paring of a pear.

Nor I (quoth he), but would rather make a vow
To leave all that I have, and live at the plough,
Than take it. What's thy mind therein? (quoth
th'other) [brother.

That shalt thou hear (hearing this, quoth he),

If so fall that th'ant bring not spiders in fear,
Then seeth he himself hanged at coming
again;

And bringing spiders in fear, when he cometh there.

He is in danger of the head spider's disdain,
Which is another death. And to 'scape both
twain,

I take it to be a busy piece of work,
And to shoot at, a crooked crabbed mark.

For both these cases (quoth th'other fly) put
case :

In either case of both, th'ant's death do ensue.
Yet in which case of both death shall first take
place, [eschew.

That will th'ant labour, first and most, to
Whose first peril in hands of us flies to view,
It shall enforce the ant in all the force he may,
For fear of death by flies, the spiders to fray.

Note (quoth th'other fly) to this, this objection,—

Nature in the spiders and the ant joineth nigh,
Which shall make th'ant jeopard much by
affection

In spiteful words to comfort spiders spitefully,
Rather than discomfort them thus fearingly.

I have seen some that for this like cause up-
stood, [harm than good.

Whose crafty couched tales have done more

They have done so (quoth th'other) and they
do so,

Where fear is small, by penalty being small;
But where penalty (as here) to death doth go,
In the ant's like tales few trip, or none at all.
Many say oft, hunger pierceth the stone wall;
But hunger and fear, where both come in like
ure,

Fear pierceth as deep as hunger, make ye sure.

The father his son, and the son his father,
The wife her husband, and the husband his
wife:

The brother, his brother, all these we gather
To have seen (compelled by fear), where fear
was rife,

Bewray and betray each other in fear of life,
Sealed see we so natural a foolish kind elf,
But he will hang his father to save himself,

Oft (quoth th'other) 'tis so, sometimes other-
wise. [have

Of flies condemned, the father and son, both
Upon their knees sued with flowing watery
eyes,

Each himself to be hanged the other to save.
That suit (quoth th'other fly) is no common
slave;

But in his appearance so strange a stranger,
That his presence (this time) will bring no
danger.

[Cc.i.v.

But contrary, in these like storms we see oft,
Where ants, spiders, or flies, th'ants like tale
must tell,

Or they in authority, forced up aloft,

Not for that their fetters up trust their truths
 well,
But (as this ant) made instruments of peril,
There shall fear force them, for fear of sus-
 picion,
To stick fast to their forcer's disposition.

They wot (or they ween), that they be watchéd
 so,
That if they be but suspect to wring or wry,
They be undone: I would rather choose my foe
To be my judge, in case judicially,
Than my friend in this fearful forced state, for
 why? [rate
Fear of forcers shall force him more aid to
To his foe, whom they love, than his friend,
 whom they hate.

Ye say well (said th'other), but I say to this,
Said suspected sorts, in fear of authority,
Notwithstanding suspicion dangerous is,
Yet some, in faction or affection we see,
Or other corruption, so affected be,
Though life lie upon it, yet by mean direct,
Or indirect, they work their affection's effect.

And so for this ant, our sole cause of talk now.
Whatever oath in promise he for fear make,
To bring spiders in fear, to bring them to bow;
Yet, either for nature's or affection's sake,
I fear he will wilily the wrong way take.
And I hope (quoth th'other) his present peril
Shall stiffly strain him to strengthen our
 quarrel.

[Cc.ii.r. (?)

But between you and me, in fine thus is it,—
 You fear here the worst, and I hope here the
 best;

You in which fear, and I in which hope, let us
 sit

Silently till practise by proof have expressed
 In what scope (for what 'scape) the ant's tale
 shall rest.

The other fly being agreed unto this,
 To see this end, both attend as meet now is.

This talk done, forty flies, and th'ant with them,
 flew

Straight to the spider, before whom th'ant now
 stands :

But how th'ant fleeth now, that shall erstsoon
 ensue.

The spider was guarded round about with
 bands,

[wands,

Saving a lane, made with tipstaves and other
 That th'ant to the spider, in hearing and show,
 Might say (as he did say) at curtsey made low.

[The tail-piece as on p. 38 is here given in the
 original.]

¶Th'ant, after entering in talk (before the head
 spider) he to him, and all the spiders (upon this
 said ground: ere thou aught begin, have an
 eye to the end), inveigheth what he can to set
 the spiders in fear of the flies.

Cap. 59.



[kk.



HONOURABLE sir, may it your honour
like

To consider that in affairs mere mundane,
Policy and power do not the stroke so strike
That strife (at stave's end) for victory or gain
Winneth alway the strong, on the weak t'ob-
tain;

But sometime we see fortune, hap, or chance
The weaker above the stronger in strife ad-
vance.

Whereof myself here mirror to behold,
Some policy, politic heads think I have,
And of your power at hand might have been
bold;

But policy and power myself now to save,
Chance would not suffer, but chance both away
drave. [wrought,

Suddenness of chance this change in me hath
From liking lively life, to doleful death
brought.

With halter here about my neck, as ye see,
Respite have I won, to see you ere I die;
For two things,—one to pray all to pray for me,
Another (as I am bound naturally)
To warn all of deep danger here presently,
At eye, in hand. But ye your heads draw near,
To hear and use my counsel following here.

This sage saying, the wise have said and say,—
Have an eye to the end, ere thou aught begin.
Of this debate begun, then, th'end here weigh
What small or no pleasure ye can therein win,
And what great displeasure ye may be brought
in;

Proving you (at best) nought to win by this war,
And proving you (at worst) utterly to mar.

[Cc.ii.v. (?)

One point of four this strife cometh to of need,
Either after strife t'agree by agreement,
Or ever to strive and never be agreed,
Or you to subdue the flies by the sword's dent,
Or the flies to conquer you, by force fervent.
Now if this beginning shall further begin,
Cast a line to th'end, and meet what ye shall
win.

First, t'agree after time of strife tasted;
In mean time on both sides the mortality,
Your cobwebs, their cottages, worn and
wasted,
All windows vacant of most fertility,
All from good order, to sinful civility;
The best end for both sides, being extented,
The beginning (on both sides) shall be repented.

Next, to continue in perpetual strife;
Purgatory that (nay, that is hell, say I)
Better dead than ever live in fear to lose life,
As both sides shall live evermore dyingly,
Still starting from sleep, all slept with waking
eye.

I better like mine end, looking for end straight,
Than thus upon this endless end still to wait.

Third, if you in subjection the flies subdue,
Th'account bringeth small gain to that end
wedded;

All flies ye cannot kill; what shall then ensue?
As many as ye keep in dread, to be headed,
So many you dread; then who is most dreaded?
One fly put in fear, putteth you in fear of ten.
Tell here your cards, and tell what ye win then.

[Cc.ii.v.

Fourth, if the flies conquer you, oh dreadful
day!

Dead in half a day ye shall be every one.
Of the three other ways in every one way
Both sides (in effect) like ill end upon;
But in this fourth (fear whereof is my most
moan),
Where all flies shall win all and bravely boast
all,
All spiders shall lose all, and spiders be lost all.

If ye reply here, and say flies (to this day)
Never won this way, but ever in loss lapped;
In rejoinder, rejoining with you, this I say,—
It happeth in one hour, that before never
happ'd, [trapped;
As it happeth me this hour with flies to be
And that this is more like to hap this present,
Than it erst hath been, mark this present bend
bent.

See (I say) each one his death here (as who
say)
Five thousand spiders on th'one side to fight
Against fifty thousand flies (oh, fearful fray),
A heap to a handful, the more side so light,
The less side so heavy: 'tis a heavy sight
In sundry respects, wherein no one of any
Feareth me so much as so few to so many.

Were they all cowards, as they are hardy flies,
Not the least fly there but he dare bite his bit
On the greatest ox that in the shambles lies; |

No weapon but the flap shall make him thence
flit,

Of the which weapon spiders can skill no wit.
But though flies but cowardly stack to the
helm,

Yet must the number this cobweb overwhelm.

[Cc.iii.r.

¶ Ten to one (in war), an unmeet matchéd
match,

[sun;

They will march on as thick as motes in the
Ten thousand (in a moment) if ye dispatch,

Twenty thousand more upon spear point will
run;

[gun.

The desperate dreadeth neither bill, bow, nor

And what gain you to kill flies thick as motes,
The rest entering on you straight, and cut your
throats?

And though they guess that many of them shall
die,

Yet if each one think sure that 'scape he shall,

As I think all so think assuredly,

Then that persuasion shall persuade them all,

Each one with other straight in strife to fall

Who may be foremost fly, with courage haut,

Th'onset to give, this castle to assault.

Your wisdom and your wisdoms all, I know,

Much more can here consider than I can;

Howbeit, good will willeth me warning to show

Of harm to come in this begun to scan

Before the end, what th'end may be, and then

So flee the worst, to fall (as you think best),

At some point with the flies to be at rest.



¶Th'ant, having brought the spiders in great fear of the multitude of flies, the head spider taking great displeasure with the ant for the same, he answereth th'ant's tale so that he bringeth all the spiders in courage again, giving (in his own name and all theirs) defiance to the flies. Cap. 60.

[The plate as on p. 252 is here given in original.]

[The plate as on p. 253 is here given in original.]

THE spiders at th'ant's tale were much abashed;
 The flies (as th'ant set them out) feared the spiders sore.
 Their weapons fell from hand, they were quite quashed. [rumoured roar
 Take peace with flies, they cried. At which
 The head spider (with wetted tusks foamed like a boar)
 In that rage, had not his honour lain thereon,
 Had th'ant had a thousand lives, he had been gone.

At this hurly burly, that spider le grand
 In his chair fretting furiously he frowneth;
 His look was commission, silence to command.
 Whereupon stately and sternly he entereth
 A discourse the ant's last told tale to meet with.
 But first th'ant to discredit, to th'ant's dis-
 praise,
 On th'ant's properties this spider thus inveighs.

Friends, I perceive the ant's tale (more false
 than fine),
 Maketh you your own shadows to dread (as it
 were)
 To proceed in war ; but stay a little time.
 Lift up your hearts all, and each one lend one
 ear, [swer.
 Till ye have heard how I this tale shall an-
 But ere I touch the pith of th'ant's tale in this,
 Hear of what property th'ant himself is.

The ant (come into the world out of the shell)
 For a time (in his time) creepeth on the ground,
 As we spiders creep here, and his piss as fell
 In stinging as our poison, well nigh is found.
 Which properties work him toward our nature
 wound ; [age,
 Whereby ants be and have been taken in all
 Our half cousins, allied in side half lineage.

This time is the ant the creeping ant named ;
 In time after this time, he to more time grown,
 Wings doth he gather, and those in him
 framed, [known.
 The flying ant thenceforth he is called and
 Then disperseth his nature, in two natures
 thrown.
 He participateth with both these in this wise,—
 A creeper with spiders, and a flier with flies.

When he crept hither first (at my request here),
 I was deceived in his age (as the devil would) ;
 I thought him too young to have wings, by a
 year ;

But now, he winged with flies, his flying tale
told,
Doth show him old enough and a year too old.
Mark this creeping ant, since wings wound him
aloft, [oft.
How he playeth on both hands, as jugglers do

He courageth the flies now, discouraging us;
But didst thou not erst promise me otherwise?
Here is th'ant brought to a narrow straight, as
thus,—
If th'ant tell the spiders how he fraid the flies,
Then seeth he his death at flies' hands straight
arise;
And if he say he couraged the flies, that lie
Shall make the spiders hate him, without cause
why.

Th'ant, having to this demand good answer
none,
None answer made he, but stood still silently.
Lo (quoth the spider) is not th'ant a good one?
Were he charged in law herewith by and by,
This obstinate silence should show him guilty.
But th'ant himself now thus far forth disclosed,
Go we now to th'ant's matter, erst preposed.

His great ground is this (whereon the whole
dependeth):
View th'end of all, ere the beginning be won;
Wherein if he allege here charge that extendeth
To us spiders, that we this war first begun,
That charge is wrong charged, for that charge
must run
Unto the flies, for they invaders here be,
And we but defenders, as all eyes may see.

And for the four points, whereof one must
th'end make

In three of which he laid loss indifferently
To lot on both sides alike, I undertake
In few words to prove that tale a loud lewd lie.
First, war here taken up conditionally,
Flies never won end of us after beginning,
But flies (at end) ever bade fie on their winning.

The second, concerning war continual,
In wet open field them, in dry warm house we,
Between these two plats, though the distance
be small, [parts three
The difference is great. Of the year's four
(Or two parts at least) they cannot trouble ye.
In winter, summer flies no windows keep;
Under men's house eaves like eaves droppers
they creep.

The third point, in our conquering of the flies,
For fearing of all flies that we make afraid,
The fool, or the infant, that his shadow spies
Will oftentimes cry out in fear, calling for aid.
But wiser folk weighing this, thus is it
weighed,—

Like fear to be had on their conquered knaves,
As hath the great Turk fear of his galley slaves.

Last, to the fourth, if flies shall spiders conquer,

Then are all spiders lost, as the ant saith sure,
And flies too (say I) but as touching that fear
For time past, of practice put memory in ure;
For time to come, let likelihood you allure
To search that kind of conquest, and ye shall
see

It never was, nor is, nor never like to be.

From the beginning—it is in books to show—
When flies (against spiders) have thus rebelled,
They either had miserable overthrow
In rebelling, or straight after refelled.
Namely one, the which generally swelled
In flies against spiders the time passed six
year, [case clear.
Which one (were there no more) showeth this

This time sundry, but chiefly, two flocks of
flies,
For religion, with some other thing to that,
One sort by east, another by west, did rise,
Of opinion contrary as far and flat
As in distance, each far from other in plat,
Th'one sort of both to be in right faith elect,
All flies (faithfully) did believe or conject.

Those flies did much harm, six or eight weeks
annoying,
Which time spiders had small rest, and those
flies less.
Spiders' cobwebs went to wrack, by destroy-
ing,
And flies' wealth wasted to beggary from riches
Forestore lashed out, in execrable excess,
Fruits then grown, much lost for help to get
them in.
How looked flies here to th'end ere they did
begin?

But what was the end of this? forsooth even
this,—
The captains, most hanged; soldiers, many
slain; [pillages,
The rest (aught worth) given in prey for

So that (to this day) they bid fie on the gain.
Thus were these two sorts of opinions twain,
One of the twain in the right way to be thought,
Both brought to one end, and both brought to
nought.

Which showeth that where flies, in matter of
most right,
Attempt t'attain matter right in manner wrong,
There their wrong manner marreth their right
matter quite.

For spiders against flies, great God's law
standeth strong. [long
Which law (in leading flies) hath willed this
You base inferiors to work your lord's will,
Obey your superiors, be they good or ill.

Thus were their matter as good as it is bad,
And we as weak, as the ant hath made you
deem,

Yet should th'ill manner in flies here now had,
Set that God upon them to strike strokes ex-
treme, [seem.

As by th'example told, the show doth well
Thus for the flies conquering of us this day,
God's aid all days before taketh all fear away.

But put case we had not (as we have) the God's
aid,

But both sides according to force of our
powers, [said)

Should conquer or be conquered, or (as th'ant
Hap happeth in one hour, as hath happed in no
hours, [showers

Which he last alleged, to shape our sharp
With o'ther his framed fears, of our confusion.
Yet th'ant here to confute, hear my conclusion.

[Dd.i.r.]

In the latter part of his saying (I say)
 He saith we may be destroyed as hap may fall.
 And it must be granted that hap so fall may;
 But grant that hap so may, ergo hap so shall—
 That argument hath strength like a paper wall.
 May fall, and shall fall, are far different marks
 To shoot at; but when the sky falleth we shall
 have larks.

For the fear, that his tongue-tromp (to you did
 sowne)
 By thus many flies to thus few spiders seen;
 Set ten flies with ten axes, one oak to hew
 down,
 That oak shall be hacked at a good while, I
 ween,
 Ere it will shrink for flies, be it sere or green;
 And the least twig that out of that oak can fall
 (The oak standing still) shall slay those ten flies
 all.

And so we oak spiders, against these twig flies,
 Were they all great flies, as most of them be
 gnats,
 And to one of us, forty of them do rise,
 Yet as the giant's paws pat down dandiprats,
 So shall we put down these dandiprat brag
 brats.
 Their most number with our most strength to
 compare, [are.
 Pudding pricks they, millposts we compared
 And where he saith though flies think many
 shall die,
 Yet each fly thinking himself shall 'scape with
 life, [say I,
 They will strive who shall set on first, here

At end of that strife they entered in this strife,
 The foolhardy flies, now most ready or rife
 To come with the first, shall feel the taste so
 tough
 That who cometh last shall think he cometh
 time enough.

[Dd.i.v.
 Th'ant's tale (from point to point) now full an-
 swered,

All force of our fear here it wiping away,
 T'enforce you from fear further encouraged,
 Hear and bear away what I shall herein say.
 A few words, highly to your comfort this day,
 Which shall set you all as far out of all fear
 As the ant's tale set you all in fear whilere.

Mark all you, that in marking your enemies,
 Their force (and not your own) do only behold
 A deadly dreadful sight it is in your eyes;
 But on your own force your eyes being round
 rolled,
 The self sight of this force shall you so embold,
 That had you no weapons here but hazel wands,
 Yet might ye count your enemies now in your
 hands.

Mark more, that your foes, in beholding you,
 Are stricken in as deep dread your force to
 view

As you are of theirs, which setteth both sides
 even now;

Mark yet more, they have ye wrong part, you
 have the true; [pursue,
 Against God's and man's law this wrong they
 Both which so strike them when they would pre-
 vail, [quail.
 That their attempt ever hath quailed, and shall

So coward a spider, where can be seen one
That will not live and die in this his known
right?

Should all spiders die (as few shall or none),
Yet in this quarrel, spiders go to bliss quite,
And flies to bale, without respect of respite.
Wherefore let the flies the ant's lesson attend,
At their this beginning, to have eye to th'end.

[*Dd.ii.r.*

And now (at end), dear friends all, pluck up
your hearts;

Take your weapons in hand, and stand up
again;

[*parts;*

Stick to your tackling in this plat on all
And as for the flies (their fare to show them
plain),

[*pain.*

Whenever they come, they shall come to their
Stand stiff to me, and stand stiff to you I shall.
Flies and flies' kin, we defy you traitors all.

The spider thus answering th'ant's tale at
length,

From point to point, no point thereof omitted,
All spiders again in full courage and strength,
Those flies to their flock with th'ant again
flitted.

Two of them (to the captain known well witted)
To fly into the tree he straight commandeth,
And th'ant unto the ladder again forthwith.

[*The tailpiece as on p. 38 is here given in
original.*]

¶ Upon defiance given by the spider to the flies,
the ant, brought again to the flies, maketh full
report of all said at the cobweb. At end where-
of, two flies argue whether th'ant have deserved
life or death, by keeping or breaking former
commandment to bring the spiders in fear of the
flies. Cap. 61.

[The plate as on p. 223 is here given in
original.]

[The plate as on p. 220 is here given in
original.]

THAT captain willed one of those flies to de-
clare
What had (since they parted) passed in this
case,
And if he ought added or minished there,
The captain willed th'other, t'interrupt him in
place,
That truth truly might appear without deface.
Whereupon the fly, assigned to say then,
In a solemn order the process began.

First, th'ant's tale told the spiders he did re-
peat, [spiders in;
And the fear that that tale brought the
Then, in repeat, the spider's tale he did treat
And what recourage that did the spiders win,
With defiance given flies, their ally, and kin.
The captain then asked: You that went forth,
tell me,
Is this tale true and the whole truth? All
said, Yea.

Two things (quoth the captain) are to touch
here on;
First, whether th'ant have deserved to live or
die;
The second, a piece of the spider's tale gone,
Which I shall touch soon; but first th'ant's
case let's try,
Upon his life or death, standing presently.
To see that case by agreement fully scanned,
It being (I say) first case to take in hand.

It is so indeed (quoth one fly) in the tree.
Wherein, while memory keepeth matter in
mind,
I pray you all patiently to hear me
Uprightly declare (as equity doth bind)
Without affection any wrong way to wind.
But even as conscience to speak doth me com-
pel,
So shall I speak this tale, which I shall now tell.

[Dd.ii.r.
Where I have heard wise flies talk, I have heard
laid,
In weighty cause, weighty consideration;
And there's no matter more weighty to be
weighed
Than that in which, upon consultation
Lieth life or death in determination.
And presently present this ant's case mean I
To weigh considerably, and indifferently.

Whose life or whose death before we determine,
Which of both to determine, meet is to weigh,
Your late determined condition, pith wherein

Was that th'ant should bring spiders in such
like fray

Of us, as he brought us of them, and I say :
He hath done so. So that in my conscience,
Life and liberty must he have, to go hence.

And I say nay (quoth the fly) in the tree by :
He hath not performed that condition at full.
To have his life, hath he not (quoth th'other fly)
To make proof appear here to wits quick and
dull :

That performance will we reason, if ye will.
Be it (quoth th'other fly), but all flies give an
ear,

To one thing good for all away to bear.

My brother fly, (and I seeming here to vary)
Both being on one part, seeming on parts
twain,

In that in this one point, we are contrary
Each one to other, it may make you retain
And detain a doubt, whether we both remain
Constant, on that part that we profess, or no.
But hear me further here, ere we further go.

[Dd.ii.v.

Th'argument of us twain, is only this one,
Concerning the condition touched formerly ;
Either by performance, or performance none,
How the ant's desert standeth, to live or to die.
Th'ant should live saith he ; th'ant should die
(say I).

Now consider that this present argument
Is to principal case but an incident.

Our chief coming is on spiders to make war,
Because we no way else can obtain our right,
Wherein we join with you, without jot or jar.

This remember I you of to scrape out quite
All doubts of our truth in judgment of heads
light.

For this case, or like case in case, uséd thus,
Showeth mistrust in no wight any case to discuss.

And now we twain to satisfy (as we can)
Ourselves, and to see you the rest satisfied,
Allege brother fly, what ye can herein scan.
Whereto, mine answer shall forthwith be applied, [tried.
Th'ant's life or death in our judgments to see
That shall (quoth the other fly) without delay
Come in ure as briefly as it fully may.

Th'ant (in his chargéd tale) to spiders told erst,
Grounded thus—ere ought begin, have eye to
th'end. [pierced,
At end of th'ant's talk, spiders' hearts it so
That it staggered and 'stonished all that whole
bend. [extend.

Weapons fallen to ground, this out cry they
Shaking of their heads and casting up their
eyes, [flies!

Take peace with the flies! take peace with the
[Dd.iii.v.

Th'ant made spiders of flies as much afraid
though,

As he made flies of spiders, in tale erst told.
I grant (quoth th'other fly) indeed he did so,
Whereto you must grant that that fear did not
hold, [bold.

For spiders (forthwith) were again brag and
Though they so were (quoth he) th'ant performed covenant.
[grant.

That (quoth th'other fly) for true I cannot

There is (in th'ant's covenant) further meaning
meant

Than the very words therein fully express ;
To bring spiders in fear of flies by bond bent,
Is not all that all flies look for in success :
But to bring and keep them in that fearfulness,
Bringing them in fear, not keeping them in
fear,
As fruitful to flies as paring of a pear.

To answer this quidity (quoth th'other fly)
You can have no more of the fox but the skin ;
The ant hath done all that he can possibly
To bring spiders in fear and keep them therein.
Whose good will not wanting, though power
cannot win [ill,
Thing that good will would win, yet is it not
Rather than blame lack of power, to thank good
will.

Put case (quoth th'other) th'ant oweth you forty
pound,
Bound in obligation, to pay at a day ;
At which day, he cometh to you (as he is bound)
And where he should bring power forty pound
to pay,
He bringeth good will, and will pay you when
he may.
Whether would ye more, (in this case of your)
Accept th'ant's good will, or blame th'ant's lack
of power ?

[Dd.iii.v.

What I would do (quoth the other) I know not,
But what I should do, that right well I know.
Th'ant showing full good will to pay me that,

And that lack of power without his fault did
grow,
I should in troubling th'ant in conscience show
A rigor. Yea, (quoth th'other fly) but in law
To what end would th'ant's good will without
power draw?

In this case (quoth he) common law condemneth
th'ant,
In that the words of the bond are fulfilled no
whit, [want;
Performance whereof, in th'ant's case, hath no
Which may appear to flies of most simple wit,
In marking these words of this covenant here
knit, [fear
Th'ant (pain of death) shall bring spiders in like
Of flies, as he brought flies of spiders here ere.

These are (in th'ant's covenant) the words in
effect [bring,
Which bind the ant the spiders in fear to
But to keep them in fear no word runneth
direct;
And common law commonly in everything
Construeth words in their common plain sense
lying,
And that th'ant made spiders afraid, ye do
grant;
Ergo, th'ant (by common law) hath kept coven-
ant.

Now to bring this case in court of conscience,
Declaring our meaning in these words to be
That th'ant should keep spiders in fearful sus-
pense,

Th'ant answering to this that never meant he
To be bound to that inconvenient decree,
The judge (in this case and place) must needs
assent [judgment.

With th'ant's meaning (against ours) to give
[Dd.iv.r.

† §† In law, conscience, and reason, as thinketh me.

The desert of this ant doth his pardon crave,
Lands, goods, bag, baggage, life, and liberty.
Friends (quoth th'other fly) I have a soul to
save,

Whereupon I protest I no malice have,
To th'ant, but in reason I think he should die.
This said, those flies to their place again did fly.

[The tail-piece as on p. 44 is here given in the original.]

¶ At end of this last argument, the captain asking the ant what he can say why he should not die, the ant, after a few words, submitteth him to their order. Whereupon the captain going to the question, the ant is condemned by the voice of the most number. The captain then willing him to make his last prayers, he doth so. Cap. 62.

[The plate as on p. 223 is here given in original.]

[The plate as on p. 220 is here given in original.]

THE captain (to this) asked th'ant, How
sayest thou?
What hast thou to say, why thou shouldst not
die here?
The talk (quoth he) for me, by the fly had now,
In reason, law, and conscience, doth me clear,
Whose which tale doth much more pithily ap-
pear
For myself than if myself had told it,
And as he told it, I pray all to hold it.

Wherein as I have kept covenant at the full,
So crave I of you to keep covenant with me.
Here stand I, to live or die now, as ye will.
But in killing me (a poor ant) what win ye?
Or what lose I? neither profit nor honesty.
Honest death, in honest fame, shall persevere;
Unhonest life, dishonest shame shall have ever.

Then said the captain : Friends, though I now
at will,
Only by virtue of mine authority,
Might give judgment here this ant to save or
spill,
Yet will I not give it, but grant to agree,
To see this case decreed by common decree;
Which shall be tried, by these two words,—yea
and no;
And straight to the question herein let us go.

All you that will have the ant live, say yea.
 Yea, yea (with a loud voice), cried a great number though.
 Now (quoth the captain) on th'other side let's see;
 All that will not have the ant to live, say no.
 No, no: cried out many, and showed many more [captain,
 Than were on th'other part. Then said the
 Ant, of thine own death thou hearest here judgment plain.

I commit me (quoth th'ant) to the great God's will. [die.
 Say thy prayers (quoth the captain) ere thou
 On the ladder, down on knees half dead he fell,
 Forthwith saying his devotion devoutly.
 In which while, two flies together wonderingly,
 Thinking th'ant to be wrongfully cast away,
 In talk between themselves, as followeth did say.

[The tail-piece as on p. 154 is here given in original.]

¶While the ant saith his prayers on the ladder,
 two flies, thinking him to be wrongfully cast
 away, pitying the case, they touch (in talk)
 three sorts of flies seen there then. Wherein is
 touched some part of the properties of neuter
 flies.

Cap. 63.

[The plate as on p. 223 is here given in original.]

[The plate as on p. 220 is here given in original.]

O H, friend (quoth the t'one fly), what a chance is this?

An innocent ant among flies to be cast!

The deed indeed (quoth th'other) damnable is;
I thought sure we should with th'ant's life have passed.

For where forty flies irefully on th'ant frowned fast,

Three score piteously looked as they th'ant [would save;
And yet th'ant cast by voice, great wonder I have.

To the two sorts that ye speak of (quoth the t'other) [to kill,

Th'one sort given to save th'ant, th'other th'ant

A third sort indifferent to th'one part or th'other [all ill;

Did here (and do elsewhere) most part of Whose mischievous manners partly show I will,

(Coming (commonly) in practised exercise,
Both among spiders, and also among flies.

These indifferents (or neuters) that part most take

That strongest is, or strongest like to be;

And which side they lean to, such number they make [we see

That they bear the bell away, and most apt To cleave to the ill part, even of property.

Which property proveth (in sorts last or first), That of all sorts this last said sort is worst.

And yet oft esteem'd with the best. For why?
They fashion themselves to follow evermore
Those that be (or like to be) I say, the most
high,
But to all, late aloft, now laid on low shore
To whom they have made curtesy most low
before,
They either see them not, or overlook them;
If chance once imbase them, they may not
brook them.

Two buckets in a well, th'one up and th'other
down, [brim:
They stand on the bucket that standeth on the
Which bucket descending, they begin to
frown.
The bucket ascending, midway they meet him,
And bucket for bucket straight th'exchange
made trim;
For among all buckets (take this a plain matter)
They bide with no bucket that's driven to drink
water.

They must have wine, with fare and cheer of the
best,
Which, where and while it lasteth in any place,
Who may show gratitude in semblance fairest
Therein contend they to give gloss of good
grace
To their viander, who may him most embrace.
Where they may win ought by fair dissimilate
show,
There they flicker and flatter, in favour to grow.

But their entertainment once drawing to end,
They make none account of thanks from begin-
ning;
Th'end of their cheer, endeth the thanks of that
bend; [ning
Straight from that place they are speedily spin-
To another host, good cheer good cheap win-
ning;
But to pay for board, wherever this flock
boards, [words.
Their current coin is low curtesy and fair

Which coin (to them) not costly, and yet so
scant,
That where and whensoever their cheer fail,
Then doth all curtesy and thanks for cheer had
want; [quail,
And not only good words in most of them
But some of the worst sort, that are given to
rail,
To turn recompense on the wrong side or shore,
Give ill words for good deeds of friends had
before.

These foelike friends, otherwise friendlike foes,
Are much like mermaids, th'one half flesh,
th'other fish;
On all texts, for all sides, they do give such
gloss [wish;
As may seem to serve all sides, as wit would
By which dissimulation, double devilish,
They wind in and out, hère and there, to and
fro;
As the reed with the wind, every way they go.

And like as we see the oak, in stout storm of
 wind,
 Standing stiff against the wind, overthrown,
 And the reed, waving with the wind, still we
 find
 Saving itself, in all our blasts of wind blown;
 So in spiders and flies like lot oft-times grown;
 True stiff standers against the wind overthrow,
 False flattering followers with the wind, stand
 and grow.

Of our open known friends, we may be sure;
 Of our open known foes, we may beware;
 But these unnatural neuters here in ure,
 Neither sure of, nor 'ware of, any wights are;
 Either flattering lies they subtly declare,
 Or when they say true (if ever they say true).
 That say they for false or ill purpose t'ensue.

They are friends to no man, but in respect
 Themselves to take good or to avoid harm,
 Or to do harm of revenging effect;
 They will attempt, by corruption, to charm
 Those under whose wings they may sit close
 and warm

To cool and control such as make any show
 To bend any way from the bent of their bow.

To regard aright, a dog hath devotion
 As much as they; but be it right or wrong,
 For love, hate, dread, or meed, in promotion,
 If it serve their turn to make the wrong part
 strong,

That part will they sing in all their sung song,
 As these indifferent neuter flies have done here,
 Whose wrongful cleaving to the wrong, killeth
 th'ant clear.

This (quoeth th'other) your saying hath made me
see

Wherein I pray to the great God heartily,
Be we spiders, be we flies, whatever we be,
That we all may (by His grace) cut off clearly
All unkindness of neuterlike indifferency.
Th'ant now at point from the ladder to be
rolled,

A fly, far off flinging toward them, cried, Hold,
hold!



¶The ant having now made his prayers, being
at point to be turned from the ladder, a fly, as far
off, crieth Hold! Who (lighting in the tree)
bringeth such a message from the head spider
as the ant (thereby) is reprieved, and carried to
prison.

Cap. 64.

[The plate as on p. 226 is here given in
original.]

[The plate as on p. 220 is here given in
original.]

UPON lighting in the tree, this said this fly :
Being in scout-watch, a spider spying me,
In the head spider's name willed me speedily
To tell this to you all : if so be that ye
Put this ant to death by currish cruelty,
He protesteth that his prisoner fly's head
Shall stand on a stake before th'ant be all
dead.

The spider's favour to th'ant made some flies
doubt [thought
How it came to pass, whether the spider then
In fearing spiders before th'ant's tale so stout,
Was more to save his life, among flies then
caught

Than to fear spiders, for which the flies th'ant
brought,
And that the taunts that the spider th'ant gave,
Were to cloak mistrust that flies to th'ant
might have.

Or that the spider's wife, pitying th'ant's case,
Obtained it by suit, or that the spider would
Use the occasion, offered there then in place,
To rid the fly by that colour, and not hold
His bond by promise made to the fly, erst told ;
Which was,—to charge and discharge him of
offence, [science.

As standeth with reason, law, custom, and con-
With this, a formal fly into the tree flew,
Beginning thus : Friends, wise flies say (and
have said)

Of two inconveniences, the worst eschew.

The worst of which two here, aside to be laid,
The best of these two is here first to be
 weighed,
To save this poor ant, to save that poor fly,
Or to slay th'ant, and both ant and fly slain
 thereby.

[*E.e.i.r.*

Considerations herein are so great,
And so many, and most of such weight,
That they are in counsel more meet to treat,
Than to make an alebench talk of, to be bait
For babbling tongues to babble on, wherefore
 straight
Mine advice is that six or eight flies most wise,
Closely consult here, the best way to devise.

Nay, nay (cried a thousand); we will none of
 that,
We will be of counsel all. Yea, will? quoth he;
That kind of counsel is more meet to halloa at
Than to talk in, for if all of counsel be,
Ye can in that counsel have no secrecy;
But (in counsel) where secrets lacketh any,
There is (ant least) one counsellor too many.

We refuse that way, cried the gross flies again,
Lest great wise flies buy and sell foolish flies
 small.
If ye (quoth he) take to counsel all this train,
Then, naught being secret, all your enemies
 shall
Be of your counsel, and buy and sell you all;
But since ye will have counsel cried at the cross,
I will disclose that I would have had kept close.

The fly in cobweb with the spider detained,
We know what he is, we need not here to
boast him. [gained?

To kill th'ant, and have that fly killed, what is
That shall all flies feel after we have lost him.
But since the spider in such sort will host him,
As we host the ant, our best way doth appear
To keep th'ant (as gage for gage) prisoner here.

[E.e.i.v.

For though th'ant (truth being told before his
face)

Be far too base that fine fly to counterpoise,
Yet if the spider esteem th'ant in like case
Above the fly, as we him above th'ant prize,
Then for delivery of both (without stays)
The spider will (in exchange) change as gladly
The fly for th'ant, as we will th'ant for the fly.

Briefly, the best way is here (in my mind)
To keep th'ant prisoner in stocks fettered fast,
Under guard of certain flies, to be assigned,
Till we see somewhat of this war further past.
And if we see cause, we may kill him at last,
Or change him for some fly that spiders may
take. [make.

To this mine advice show yours, an end to
At this, much bumbling among them all there
was,

Many words, little matter, and to no purpose;
Number of sentences here I may let pass,
As things not worth the hearing here to dis-
close. [prose

And pass they must, for neither in rhyme nor
I can win memory well to write with pen
The tenth sentence given there, against th'ant
then.

And though memory might the number have
 contained,
 Yet was all confused so, in such bibble babble,
 All alike lowed, and all too loud, in voice con-
 strained,
 That all parts of best wit had been unable
 To catch, keep, and make, th'account explic-
 able
 Of all sayings there said. Wherefore (as I say)
 Not only they may, but they must, pass away.

[Ee.ii.r.

But finally, all their chat chatted, anon
 To the fly's last tale they all did so agree,
 That th'ant (guarded) went to prison. Where-
 upon [decree,
 Quoth the captain: Since this is passed by
 Being one point of two erst moved by me,
 To be moved to you, in th'other point now
 Conceive, and receive the thing I shall show
 you.

[The tail-piece as on p. 72 is here given in
 original.]

¶The captain fly inveigheth upon matter before
 passed, in such sort so encouraging the flies
 again, that anon they all crying to the captain
 to march forward, they bravely set forth. And
 laying their ordnance to the cobweb castle, they
 besiege it round. Cap. 65.

[The plate as on p. 223 is here given in original.]

[The plate as on p. 220 is here given in original.]

THIS thing I mean which brought spiders
in fear;
Th'ant moved all the spiders to cast their eyes
Upon us their enemies, whose show of strength
there
Showed so puissant (by huge number of us
flies), [terprise.
That they (much by that sight) gave up th'en-
Whereon the spider three inventions inveighed,
Reviving the spirits of the spiders in aid.

First, the spider to this willed the spiders all
To cast eye from our force, and behold their
own,
Which sight, such strength (he said) to their
hearts must call,
That a heartless hearted spider should be
grown
Hardy to fight, till we flies be overthrown.
Hazel-wands in their hands to halberts in ours
He matched to over match us in our most
powers.

Secondly, he bade them think that we do dread
The sight of them, as much as they do fear us;
Thirdly, to set cock on hoop and run on head,
Their right seen (saith he) to fight in to death
thus,

The most coward will fight and by his discuss,
Straight to bliss go they, straight to bale go
we. [three.
But hear me part the stake in these cases

First, we them beholding and they us viewing,
The fear falleth indifferently on either side;
Next, each side viewing itself hath ensuing
Of like courage to both sides to be applied;
Thirdly, he labouring right by fight to be tried,
With clear conscience on their side; let that be
weighed
Upon this my next saying, when I have said.

[Ee.ii.r.]

The spider to th'ant in this told tale erst said,
Laid to us flies rebellion, he laying
Example of plagues passed, where flies dis-
obeyed [obeying,
The great God's commandment, which dis-
Hath plagued such flies, according to his say-
ing.
Upon his which saying, hear me somewhat say,
How case of rebellion from our case doth
weigh.

All subjects in violent variance grown,
Against the high powers, they by that great
God placed,
His work hath showed his will, to bring over-
thrown, [braced
Suffer, and not resist, that must be here em-
And fulfilled, or else as such flies, in time past,
Have been scourged for resisting, so shall we,
And so to be scourged well worthy we be.

But perceive these high powers must take high
place
As standeth with law of the great God right-
fully,
For otherwise it falsifieth in this case

Their said defence at God's hand ; and contrary
Where extort power usurpeth place wrongfully,
The God doth right oft, in such usurpation,
Put miraculous power to th'extirpation.

Oft making th'instruments of the overthrow
As far to compare under the overthrown
As flies under spiders in comparison show ;
And how this spider hath usurpedly grown
To potentate state, that is to us unknown ;
I never heard fly yet that ever could tell
Ground of title, why his state should thus excel.

[Ee.ii.v.]

And he an usurper, as I think he is,
You thinking so too, can we think that he,
Breaking the God's law (as he doth doing this)
Shall in th'ill deed by good God defended be,
Whom he and his offend, offending his decree?
Nay, hazel-wands in our hands the God's power
leads,
To beat back their halberts, to break their own
heads.

And where he allegeth that the spiders' right
Is a safe warrant with safe conscience to die,
For all such spiders as shall die in that fight,
And that flies dying therein die damnably,
That loud lusty lie for a lie warrant I.
With safe conscience (in this case) courage
arise,—
To bale go all spiders, to bliss go all flies.

The flies, upon hearing and doing of this,
All stert up and stood up most courageously ;
With one voice all cried : Sir captain, our mind
is

To give 'sault to the cobweb even by and by.
 Wherewith, much more wilfully than wittily
 (And yet not witless) into array they got,
 Marching toward the cobweb, within gun shot.

The watch-tower struck alarum, th'enemies
 descrying;

The gunners gave fire; and first at random they
 Shot off, the gunstones among the flies flying,
 Which galled the flies cursedly coming on the
 way. [may,

But forth flying the flies now, as fast as they
 Without trenching or such defensive forestalls,
 Ordnance they lay, to batter that castle walls.

[Ee.iii.r.

¶†Great shot and grievous slaughter of flies
 there was

Ere they could any piece of the walls batter,
 To make it 'saultable; but so came to pass
 That, in short time, that wall they did so
 shatter

That their way lay plain, and straight to the
 matter

(For which they came), they went to such a
 fierce fight

As never fought spiders and flies in man's
 sight.

[The tail-piece as on p. 154 is here given in
 original.]

¶The flies give onset in assault upon the castle,
 the spiders defending it in furious fight. And,
 upon the slaughter on both sides, the flies re-
 tire to their camp, the spider's wife and chil-
 dren, on knees to him, beseeching him to take
 peace with the flies. Cap. 66.



[To face page 288.]



IN all battered breaks flies, raging in a rank,
 Fiercely flew in, all black as the cloudy sky,
 Spiders defending them; spider nor fly shrank,
 Hundreds striking with guns in pieces twenty;
 There a leg, here an arm, there a head doth fly;
 And piece from piece, by violence flown round,
 A flight shoot asunder, and as far from ground.

Both sides to see—so busily occupied
 With pole-axes, partisans, halberts, bills, guns,
 Trumpets on both sides, each t'encourage their
 side—

The annoyance of the noise through my head
 runs. [sons,—

The sonless flies' fathers, the fatherless flies'
 With this thing, above all thing, (alack!
 alack!)

Oh what woeful widow flies go now in black!

Three-quarters of an hour this fight endured;
 Which time, I imagined doom's-day present,
 And that all the damned souls had been pro-
 cured [bent,

To come with the devil thither, in his band
 There to set up hell, to suffer their torment.

For, during the time, I think no worldly sight
 More like hell than was sight of that helly fight.

Terror whereof was, to be witnessed well,
 To see so many, alive so late, now dead;
 Thousands setting on that cobweb (with heart
 fell) [head;

Hang now there (like herrings in nets) by the
 And spiders for their part, nor scotfree led,
 Here some, and there some, snatched up amid
 the rout

That were, within half an hour afore, full stout.

[¶—99.

At end of this fray, no part saw cause to
boast,—

Five thousand flies and five hundred spiders
slain ;

Wherewith the flies, seeing so many flies lost,
And of their purpose could yet no part obtain,

At retreat of trumpet, they retired amain

Where they before had camped, there to take a
breath,

To save their honesty, and keep them from
death.

The spiders were as glad to see the flies' backs
As flies were to show them, for what time they,
(Beholding dead spiders) each seeth his friend
lacks,

Few spiders (or none) saw cause to joy that day.

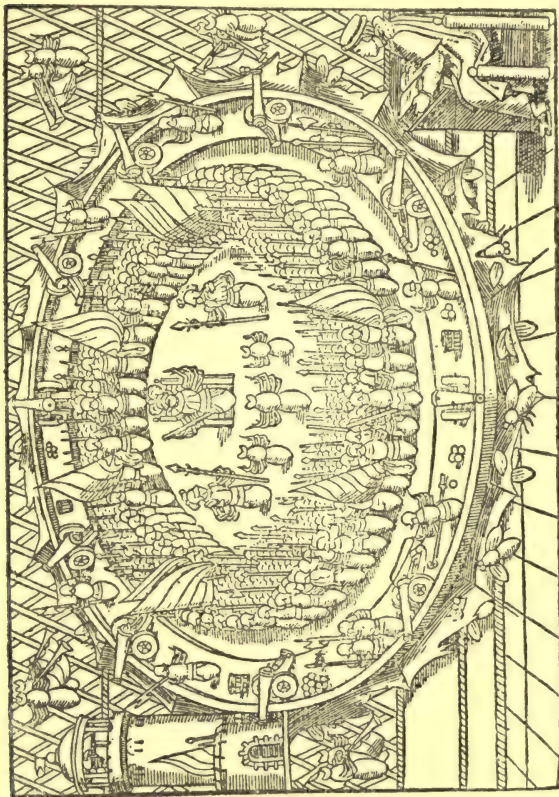
The spider's wife and children, near dead in
fray,

On knees besought him, in way of petition,
With the flies to take peace, on some condition.

[The tail-piece as on p. 38 is here given in
original.]

¶The spider, having compassion on his wife and
children as on himself, he saith that he will,
with the advice of his council, in their suit do
all that may be done for the best. Cap. 67.

[The plate as on p. 223 is here given in original, preceding the following illustration.]



THE spider, in hearing of this their request,
Seeing them in such fear, as he saw them there,
That sight and hearing may at first sight be guessed
In husband and fathers that any zeal bear
To their dear wives and sweet babes, at eye and ear;
[sight and sound
The sight showeth, and hearing soundeth such
As may their zealous hearts to death well nigh wound.

What kind-hearted husband can see his kind wife,
In like careful case, without woe at his heart?
What natural father can see, for his life,
His natural children, in dread quake and start,
Without his heart smarting in most smartful smart?
I think, ye think, none, and even so think I;
Marvel not, then, though the spider be touched nigh.

He tenderly tendereth his children and wife,
Refusing to stand up when he bade them rise,
Till he would grant them (his grace) to stint this strife.
His sight of fear in them and fury in flies,
Added his more perplexity to devise
To use pity to them, as nature drove him,
And policy to flies, as reason gave him.

To this he said, My dear wife and sweet babes two,
Great were the thing by you of me desired
That I could deny, in what I can do.

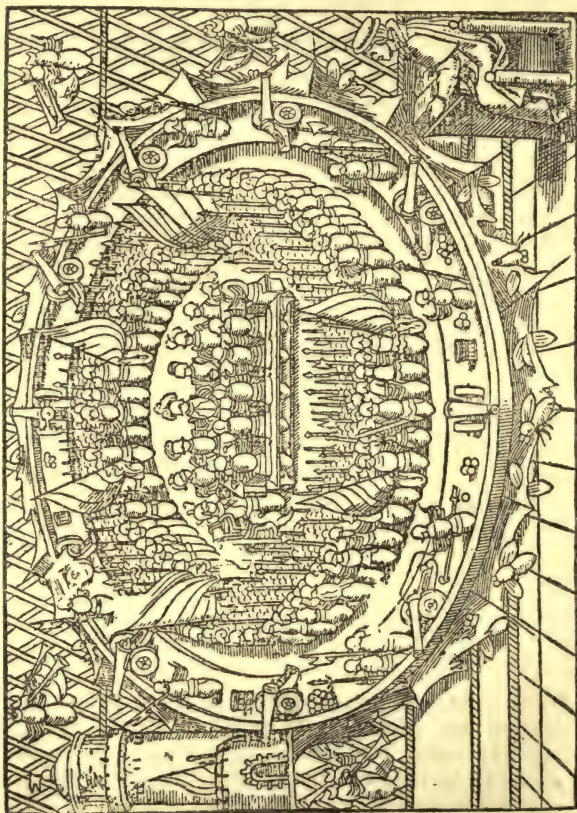
But for this treason, spitefully conspired,
 And so put in ure by flies now retired,
 Your suit therein, if I should grant out of
 hand,
 As the case standeth, I doubt how that grant
 should stand.

⁵ This case, touching me and all spiders most ^[¶¶.]
 nigh, ^[scanned.]
 In me and my council shall forthwith be
 Go in and be cheerful, and fear not, but I
 Will favour and further your suit as may stand
 With most safety of us, and all our whole band.
 They rose and made curtsey; forthwith where-
 upon
 (They and he weeping) they (from him) thence
 are gone.

[The tail-piece as on p. 154 is here given in
 original.]

¶The spider, set with twelve of his council, de-
 clareth his wives' and children's suit (adjoin-
 ing thereunto considerations of his own) for
 peace to be taken with the flies, requiring those
 councillors (while he depart and return) to de-
 termine what way he shall take. Cap. 68.

[The plate as on p. 252 is here given in original, preceding the following illustration.]



THE spider with his council to counsel gat;
The flies, flocking together, as was then
need,

In consultation, full busily sat,
Each side for themselves, best way to see de-
creed.

I gave ear to both sides, to hear them proceed,
Stretching my memory to a double charge,
To hold (upon hearing) both th'effects at large.

And first, what I gathered on the spiders' side
That shall ye have, and then the talk of the
flies.

The spiders at a board themselves did divide,
Six on th'one, six on th'other side to devise
(And beside, such matter as should there arise).
The head spider, in a chair at the board's end,
Entereth as followeth hereafter pend.

Dear friends, our present peril in words to
dilate,

It in deed, in heart felt, and at eye here seen,
Should show fully. Our case is now to debate
Our best way to wind out of this danger clean,
To stay our state, as before stayed hath been.
Wherein between two things I doubtfully doubt,
To which one I shall undoubtedly stand stout.

My wife and children, upon their knees all
three,

With dead hearts as death in their faces did
As I love their lives humbly besought me

By some means forthwith to peace with flies to
grow.

For should they (said they) see the like over-
That they had seen between our enemies and us,
Of their present deaths they felt feeling discuss.

This perplexeth me,—what one way to take of
twain : [“

Nature provoketh me (in pitying those three)
To take peace with the flies, to run amain.
Reason provoketh me politicly to flee
The show of desire in peace with flies to be.
Which pity to use, and policy to refuse, [news.
How cruel flies will cock with us, that's no
Now, on th'other side, if I pity omit,
Nought weighing my wife and offspring in this
case,

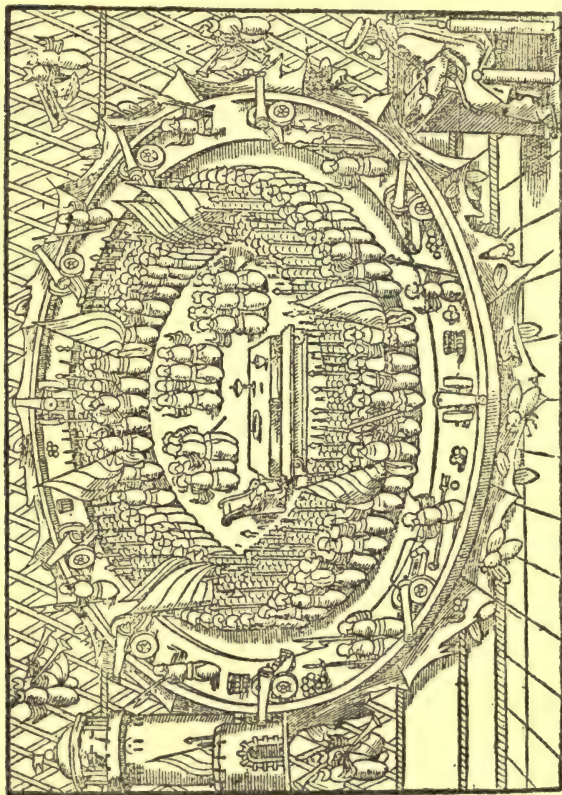
But do bend upon policy every whit
To outface the flies, to stand face to face,
And these three (by dread) to die in the mean
space, [have,
Then am I double dead, th'one that they death
T'other to see them die, whom myself might
save.

I pray this whole board this case first to re-
volve,
Each in himself, and then all together speak,
Devising your best. Wherein while ye resolve,
Your full minds to me (at my return) to break,
I'll go to cheer my wife and babes, woe and
weak. [ear
They prayed him to do so, which rang in mine
That they were more glad to have him thence
than there.

[The tail-piece as on p. 234 is here given in
original.]

¶Straight as the spider is gone, the rest arise,
withdrawing asunder in three plumps, four in
a plump, no one knot knowing what the rest
saith. Which done, they all sit down again
against the spider's return. Cap. 69.

[The plate as on p. 252 is here given in original, preceding the following illustration.]



THE spider's back turned, straight these
twelve arose
By four, four, and four, flocking into flocks
three,
Every flock talking, and standing together
close,
Each flock unto other (by ought I could see),
As strange and as loth that their talk heard
should be [season
As all could have been that that spider that
Should have heard their talk, had they all
talked reason.

All showed one manner, which showed them all
meved,
Beating their fists, bending their brows, shak-
ing their heads;
In fear and fury all were greatly grieved.
Talk of two of which three flocks whereto it
leads,
I could not yet know, soft whispering, not far
spreads. [near).
But talk of the third flock (standing somewhat
Harkening somewhat to them, somewhat did
I hear.

Friends (quoth one of those four), we four
being one,
We may talk (and let us talk), frankly our
minds.
This spider (our ringleader) to his flock gone,
In debate of this case, to which he us binds,
Is to me not unguessed how he with us winds.
But first, not to teach, but to tell what he is,
And then what he meaneth here, hear me say
in this.

The spider is of wit, wondrous dark and deep,
And double as double, as he is deep and dark.
Lover where he loveth, laugh where he hateth
to creep

To bottom of bosom, for to spy what spark,
Kindled with or against him, he may there
mark.

Much for which purpose he giveth us now a
bone

Of pity and policy to gnaw upon.

[Ec.iii.r.

But except we spice pity and policy both,
As the seasoning may savour in taste, to stand
As in his taste and savour savourly goeth,
He will gnaw our bones out of taste out of
hand.

Which ye shall see when I this scantling have
scanned,

Between his politicless pity (erst said)
And his pitiless policy, (here erst laid)

This doubt, to bring out of doubt, he hath us
set,

Whether (by pity) to save his babes and wife
He shall seek to flies some peace of them to get,
Or by policy to stand stiff still in strife,
And lose both his babes, and also his wife's
life.

First case, showing our danger in general,
Last case, showing his danger in special.

This trap (not for mice) for spiders is baited
To see what bit we bite or on what string we
harp.

If his pity here be restrained or straighted,

And that (on his policy) our tongues do carp,
 More to save ourselves from danger of death
 sharp

Than to save him and his, we playing those
 parts [hearts.

He will sure suspect that we have traitors'

And if we leave policy, and pity take,
 Concluding that we will bide all jeopardy
 Rather than see of him or his one finger ache,
 I'll hold a hundred pound to a halfpenny
 That he will take all that talk for flattery.
 Though his eye on us thereat pleasantly pink,
 Yet will he think that we say not as we think.

[*Ee.iii.v.*

These two two-edged cases take I for such,
 That they may be taken a two-edged sword;
 Each side of both cutteth, wherever it touch.
 But when we shall resolve at yonder board,
 Leaving these two ways, I have devised a third.
 Wherewith, a tale he told them, so silently
 That (till he told it at board), no word heard I.

But in taking end, I heard him to them say:
 The spider will our minds severally know,
 And I, the youngest, shall speak first (no nay).
 And so each other following, sitting a-row.
 Wherein, as you in course to speak (after me)
 grow,

Say you: In this deep case, upon deep weigh-
 ing,

Ye have naught to say, but t'affirm my saying.

And so shall we (said he) save our four lives.
 They agreed. And to touch the second sort
 now,

Ancients to the first, one of them four contrives

To conclude, in matter what or manner how
From hearing I was yet kept (as I told you),
But the talker to that flock at end spake out
These words: This way shall save our four
lives, no doubt.

Of the third and most ancient flock likewise,
One at end of his talk these words aloud spake :
This way shall save our four lives. Or at least
size

Our honesties, and honest spiders undertake
Life much rather than honesty to forsake.
Ye say truth (said the three) and we three agree
With you to lose life, rather than honesty.

[*Ee. iv. r.*

¶ With this, they all at the board sat down
again,

That they (at the spider's return) might appear
Set as he left them, all as one to remain,
While he went to and came from his flock most
dear.

Who (so finding them), with sad and sober
cheer,

Sat down in his chair where he had sat erst,
And this process to his purpose promptly prest.

[*The tail-piece as on p. 272 is here given in
original.*]

¶ *The spider sat again with his council, in those
three said sorts arise three divers ways to take
herein. The best one whereof to choose, the
spider departeth to devise upon, willing them
to cause all corners of that castle to be cleansed
and all battered places made strong again.*

Cap. 70.

[The plate as on p. 252 is here given in
original.]

[The plate as on p. 294 is here given in^[ss.]
original.]

AS I told you I would go, so have I gone
To comfort my wife and mine in your
names all,
Assuring them of your good hearts every one
To pity and relieve their dread, as may fall
In your most portable peril, come what come
shall. [them so,
Which hath (and naught else could) comforted
That quiet they hark to hear, how th'end shall
go.

Now, in case of pity and policy, erst laid,
Touching the two doubts which I was, and
am in,
I require fully to hear what ye have weighed;
Wherein your sentences severally to win,
You shall severally speak, and the youngest
begin. [would),
Wherewith that youngest (as he erst said he
In words next following here, his tale he told.

In these two cases, bolted, sifted, and fanned,
To sue for peace in pity of you and your,
Or (by policy) to war stiffly to stand,
The doubts debated here, in most might of our,
Require this demand, judged in my most power;
Whether to take no peace, or what peace to
take,
Labour wherein, I think vain, all that we make.

If I be worthy in your council to live,
My counsel is that all your study shall be,
Not what peace ye shall take, what peace ye
will give,

The flies being afraid as much or more than we.
Will not they seek for peace? yes, I warrant
ye :

Trust not my wit, except ye have out of hand
Flies suing to take peace, as your will shall
stand.

Wherein what your will shall be ere the flies
come, [wade,
Good is to dream to what point in peace to
And not when they come to stand mute or mum,
In lack of an answer (by you or yours made).
Needful haste in this case doth me full per-
suade

From needless hasty device in th'other cases,
Both which (this taking place) they take no
places.

This (under your correction) is my full mind.
And mine (quoth the second), and mine (quoth
the third),
And mine (quoth the fourth). Quoth the fifth,
I am inclined

Of another mind than this tale hath now stirred.
For two causes; th'one, for that this toucheth
no word

Of the case propound, which is our charge to
touch;

Th'other, for that I have other matter
t'avouch.

The pith of these two cases I take to consist
Whether (by pity your fearful flock to save)
We shall take peace with the flies as the flies
list,

To our common danger, by pride of flies brave;
Or politicly show that we no peace will have
To fear flies, and save us, yours and you, in
By their fear of wars continual quarrel. [peril

I hold the best one way of these both to be,
To save your wife and children, your succe-
sion,

And thereby you. For, lacking you, what are
we?

Who can (like you) save us from oppression?
Our benefits (by you) enforce confession:
For notable governance in governors,
Never was felt our like governance to yours.

Your offspring so toward to rule after you,
As you rule before them to their erudition,
For our inestimable wealth now, and after now,
No spider hath the contrary suspicion:
But all spiders, in most humble submission,
Submit them whole to you so loved or dread,
As never was ruler that ever spiders had.

Our commodities won by you being huge,
Huge were our loss likewise by your being lost.
You and yours, appearing here our whole re-
fuge,

Pity or policy which shall be the post:
In this case to stick to my sentence bendeth
most, [rise,
Ere danger (by bread) to you or yours shall
To cleave here to pity, and take peace with
flies.

So say I (saith second) of that second sort.
And we, said the third (and fourth) which said
anon.

The first of most ancient four his report
Beginneth, but first this tale last gone
He seemeth to commend (in part); whereupon
He showeth his mind; but first (I say) in words
fair,

He saith as followeth next, of this last sayer.

Said this said ancient spider: This tale told last
Somewhat to touch (under pardon) I intend.
The teller's mind I dispraise in no part past,
But in sundry parts I can his mind commend;
Namely, in that his mind is bent to defend
You and yours from the death, as he ought
to do,

As far as duty duly draweth, and we too.

But as these two doubtful dangers touch our
state

From top to toe, (as who say, high, mean, and
So from brim to bottom them both to debate,
In faithful plain manner, (as in heart may grow)
All dark dissimulation to overthrow;
Subtly sounding to sense depraved,
That trace shall I tread, under pardon craved.

In these two tossed terms, pity and policy,
To turn and toss recital, of this whole case,
No need. After recital so sundrily,
The terms but named, where memory is most
base:

Remembrance of the whole, those terms bring
to place.

Which pity is here applied, to save you and
And policy here applied to save us and ours.

Beseeching you, and all you before I say,
Till all my saying be said, judge therein no
part.

But thoroughly hear me without stop or stay,
And take in good part, my plain true meaning
heart.

Good tales, ill taken may make the teller smart.
But here, I pray hearing, and having ex-
pressed,

In following the effect, do as seemeth you best.

But first these two terms, pity and policy,
(As I understand them) hear me them define.

Pity is an effect of all clemency,
That doth alway most clemently incline
To have regard to remittable discipline;
In matter of justice, or any case else,
All displeasent sufferance pity it expels.

[Ff.i.v.

Policy is the thing that circumspectly weigheth.
Wisely (and warily) to put things in ure;
As reasons furthest fetch in foresight purvey-
eth,

An overreach above the weak wit's cure;
So to put things in ure, that they may endure,
As no light blast of wind do overblow them,
Nor lack of firm foundation overthrow them.

And policy, right taken (as I take it)

In good part is taken, and construed ever.

Policy is not as some spiders make it,
Witty wretched wile, that doth all endeavour
In wrongful ill to invent, to persevere.

The name of policy there is to be last,
And to be named falsehead, otherwise false
craft.

Pity, wrong named, and wrong used also,
 May be and hath been as where it is applied,
 To help one or few, to the hurt of many more,
 The pitied part being deep offenders tried,
 Th'other part innocent. This (clear to decide)
 Is either not pity, or peevish pity,
 Which (as th'old saying saith) marreth the city.

But the right use of pity is (as I guess)
 To pity part, as pity may pity all,
 Without wrongful hurt any one to oppress.
 This mean I in use of pity general :
 But touching case (namely, yours) especial,
 How it and such, from this general case
 swerve,
 Shall be touched anon, as my mean wit may
 serve.

[Ff.ii.r.

But policy and pity, pictured thus,
 I take man and wife and temperance (as who
 say)
 Minister in this marriage I discuss,
 Knitting this couple in steady stinted stay,
 Policy to command, and pity to obey;
 Policy her husband, and pity his wife,
 Politicly to keep all from pitiless strife.

Where policy may bring pity, promptly placed,
 That husband will not keep that wife out of
 place;
 And that wife (that husband's assent not pur-
 chased) [grace
 Will not presume to take place, both to dis-
 Her husband, and also herself to deface.
 Thus policy and pity, in case general,
 Join (for common wealth) in common goveral.

But now, to grow toward speciality,
 Where I laid misuse of pity before
 To stand in not pitying generality,
 By pitying the less number before the more,
 Though that rule lean rightly to the right shore,
 In case of pity, much misused generally,
 It may (and doth) fail in some case specially.

Some three or four are in pity to be weighed
 More than some other three or four thousand
 are

In sundry cases, which policy doth aid.
 Namely and properly now here to declare
 In particular case of your present care,
 To save us and ours, and lose you and yours,
 Or lose you and yours, and save us and ours.

[Ff.ii.v.]

The loss of four thousand of mean spiders now,
 Touching dangerous disturbance of the state,
 Were less loss than were you four, and chiefly
 you.

But the loss of the whole corps, of us to rate,
 With loss of you four the most loss to debate.
 This case to our case presently directed,
 Is needless or bootless, to be respected.

Needless I take the talk, as in this respect.
 First our case reacheth not determinately
 To death of you, or us, but it doth direct
 A dread of death in yours, and in you thereby,
 Or danger of death in us; not death clearly,
 But dread or danger of death, and death out-
 right,
 Are oft (and now I hope) far distant in sight.

Yours in dread, and we in danger, of death
 much, [whit,
 All may be brought, and death yet follow no

Neither in yours, nor ours. And this case is
such,

As if ye will therein policy admit
To outface flies, the corps of spiders to knit
In courageous countenance, then shall ye see,
The flies in fear, and your fear needless to be.

As the talk is needless to compare the loss
Of us all with you four, for none shall be lost;
And otherwise, bootless, in this talk to toss,
In matter on this side or that side to boast
The most or least loss, for all, least and most,
Shall die. If ye shrink and seek peace, flies
will none.

Then we being first slain, you and yours are
gone.

[Ff.iii.r.

Will they slay us and save you, seeing this war
Against you is chiefly or only begun?
Nay, make ye sure ye are the principal bar,
Or beam, in their eyes, as the quarrel doth run.
Wherein I perceive no way ought to be won,
But politicly t'encourage all our whole rout
Afresh against the flies, in array to stand stout.

We in courage, out of courage the flies are,
And we out of courage, in courage are they.
We spiders pressing forward, back the flies
bear;

[stay.

Spiders drawing back, forth press flies without
Thus ye see policy here must make the way,
If any way may be made, by possible powers,
To preserve all, both you and yours, us and
ours.

This under pardon of you and yours, erst
prayed,
Is both my conscience and my counsel plain.

And mine (quoth the next of the three) with
him stayed.

And likewise ours also (quoth those other
twain). [retain

The spiders' outward words, showed show to
All their sayings and all alike to like well.

But how he liked inwardly, I could not tell.

But on these three divers tales a part to muse,
Which one to take, or which to leave of all
three,

He said he would (and did) depart to peruse.

Willing them in meantime an order to see

That castle in warlike case again to be.

Whereupon he to his inner mansion gone,

To the soldiers spiders they went anon.

[Ff.iii.v.

To whom that most ancient spider repeated

Such part hereof as was meet for them to hear.

But first he invented in that he treated

To encourage them all to be of good cheer,

And pluck up their hearts, if flies again march
near.

Matter of which rule such, and the tale so told,

That it brought the spiders again brag and
bold.

Then entereth he into repetition,

Of commandment given for that sort renewing,

For cleansing and strengthening in each con-
dition,

As it was before former 'sault in viewing,

The peril of a second 'sault eschewing;

To lay down their weapons, and set to their
hands [stands.

To scour and to repair all there that in need

The whole number (saving reserved to watch
The watch in the watch tower and upon the
walls),

Lay by their weapons, each one his place to
catch. [falls;

To strengthen weak places, each one to work
Strongly they stop up all gun hole galls;
All places spied in any kind of faulting
Made strong in defence of a second 'saulting.

The dead spiders they buried in the castle close,
The dead flies hanged out in gibbets openly.

But to see the spiders, how they turn and toss,
Some making of graves, some the spiders bury,
Some making gibbets, some hanging flies on
high,

Some spinning threads to repair that castle
wall,—

I never saw the like, nor I think never shall.

[Ff.i.r.

¶ Which, while they bring in pre-estate, now to
hear

What the flies (in common counsel not private)

Be in devising what way may best appear

On their part, each party to save his own pate.

They, being set in counsel it to debate

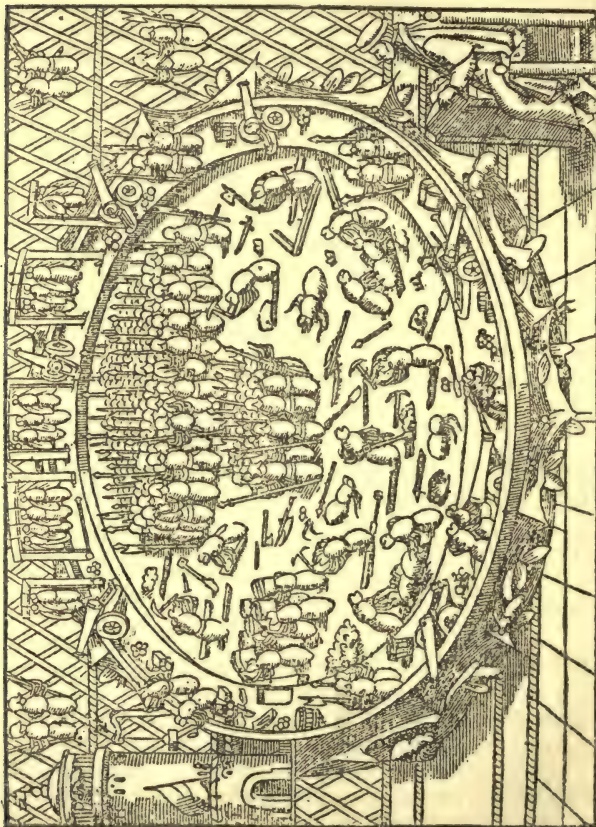
In a troop beside the reformation tree,

Th' order and th' end followeth here, to hear
and see.

[The tail-piece as on p. 272 is here given in
original.]

¶ The flies in camp be at counsel, desirously
devising, by what mean to get peace best.
Whereupon the captain inventing a mean to
drive th' ant to sue for peace if they will be ruled
by him, they thereunto agree. And thereupon
the ant is brought before the flies. Cap. 71.

[The plate as on p. 252 is here given in original, preceding the following illustration.]



In original this is placed at commencement of Cap. 72. It is absolutely accurate as to incident and outline, and is probably from a photograph. But it is a bad and faint impression as compared with original.

THE flies discouraged (as erst disclosed),
They all cried to take peace some manner
of way.

A warfare to fare, that fare them disposed
Rather to fast, and to fare full hard that day
Than sharp 'saults, with sour sauce to taste
more in say.

Their bumbling buzzing at their captain's cry
ceased,

This advised advice to them he expressed.

Friends all, that ye all would have peace, ye all
show;

But what way to come to peace, none of you
tell. [grow;

Two plain ways there be, to provoke peace to
One to submit us on knees to our foes fell;

Another, to offer them talk, war to expel,
By taking peace under condition such,

As may extinct (in both parties) all cause of
gruch.

But first, if we submit us, all are undone;
Mean mercy, nay, main misery, shall be our
end;

Flies knees to furious spiders win no boon.
The second, and the best way is, to extend
Some talk as I told; which if ye condescend
To follow, we must enter talk in the same
By some other bye mean than in our own name.

If we sue directly, spiders will be proud,
And we either get no peace, or such a peace
As between war and that peace small choice
avowed.

Exactions, ransoms, or fines, shall never cease;
Bonds of good abearing shall no release;

Flies' lands, flies' goods, flies' lives, and flies'
liberty,
Many clearly lost, and all in jeopardy.

But you following (as ye ought) my counsel,
I will drive th'ant to make suit this suit to sue,
By a tale told to him here, which I will tell,
If ye will hear it and sooth it. The flies grew
To agree. Wherewith certain flies for th'ant
flew

Who fet and set at ladder foot by the flies,
The captain (to th'ant) did this tale devise.



¶The captain telleth the ant that the flies have
retired from th'assault: (where many spiders
are slain) to see whether the spiders will sue
for peace, for which since they sue not, the
flies will assault them again. But the ant they
will hang straight before they go. Cap. 72.

[The plate as on p. 252 is here given in
original.]

[The plate as on p. 312 is here given in
original.]

ANT (plain and true, short and sharp), a
tale of me,
Told to thee, thou must hear. Thus standeth
the case.

A great conflict (even now) the spiders and we,
Have had, which slew spiders a piteous pace,
Till pity wrought our retire, to see what grace
Might appear in them to sue to us for peace,
In giving us our right, this war to surcease.

And that they do us wrong intolerable,
I durst make thee (their friend) our judge for
my part;

The abomination is inscrutable,
To pronounce at full, how they (by will per-
vert) [smart,

Have wrongfully wrung us, to wrongs of most
Which we have borne, and never thereon
wroken, [broken.

Till the burden our backs and necks hath

And when we hope (if we at any time hope)
That our breakback burdens shall come to end,
Then showeth th'increase of our burdens so
large scope,

That they seem but begun, none end seen t'in-
tend;

Wherein their force forceth us to band in bend.
Rather than bide their perpetual shackling,
To stand against them, and stick to our tack-
ling.

As we have stuck now here (I say) to their
 pain; [said]
 And to avoid their more pain (I say) and
 Being loth to set abroach their blood again,
 We have trained a long time (indifferently
 weighed)
 To keep them from th'extreme extremity
 stayed,
 To see their suit for peace us to peace t'at-
 tempt, [empt.
 Which, through their own fault, (we say) is ex-

[¶].
 But since they sue not, we will set on again,
 To leave no spider (or else no fly) alive.
 But ere we go we have made decree certain
 To hang thee straight, ant—it booteth not to
 strive.
 Get a ghostly father that can shortly shrive;
 Dispatch, hangman; some fly go some bell to
 toll,
 That spiders and flies may pray for th'ant's
 soul.

[The tail-piece as on p. 154 is here given in
 original.]

¶The ant, upon sudden short warning of his
 death being much dismayed, laying all that he
 can for his life, and yet can get no grace, he
 prayeth respite while he be brought to the
 spider to see whether he will grow to any peace
 to save the ant's life. Which granted, the ant
 is brought before the spider. Cap. 73.

[The plate as on p. 223 is here given in original.]

[The plate as on p. 312 is here given in original.]

NEVER was there ant (I ween) so astonished
 As was this ant upon this chief fly's tale told;
 Had be been an ant plenteously moneyed
 He would have given sacks full of silver and gold [to hold,
 To have been safe thence, but he prayed them
 And hear him speak once again before he die.
 Which granted, this began the ant by and by.
 Master Captain (and all my masters here flies)
 I beseech you consider, considerately,
 Not only that none enmity doth arise
 In me toward you, proved approbately,
 Before nor since my sufferance captivately;
 But friendship in advising you peace to keep,
 Where war hath since brought many flies in
 dead sleep.

Also to view I humbly you instant,
 What time ye have hanged me, what thing ye
 have won?

The carcass of a poor wretched silly ant
 Not worth the rope that it hangeth by in the
 sun. [were spun

Weigh well (with yourselves) what a thread this
 An innocent by tyranny to death to draw,
 No fly thereby winner the worth of a straw.

Note more; this thing once done, can never be
 undone,

And till it be done, may be done when ye will;
 Which being now done, and repented as soon,

Too late cometh that repentance to avoid th'ill.
Mark more; if you in this fury me here kill,
Then the fair flower of flies (as ye take him)
dieth, [lieth.
As from the spider, threatening therein erst

Quoth the captain, Turn the ladder! Th'ant
cried, Stay!

If all this aforesaid, my life will not save,
Hear this device, devised another way,
That is, it may like you I your grant to have
Of one poor petition, which I last here crave.
Let me go guarded to the spiders again,
To prove what peace I can for my life obtain.

Be it so, cried the flies, who made a herald go:
To make most humble suit in behalf of th'ant,
That he and (save forty flies with him, no mo')
Might be admitted to his speech that instant.
The spider (seeming to grant it, hard and
scant)

Bade him come. Wherewith away the herald
went,
Showing the flies and ant the spider's assent.

Forty flies guarding the ant flew forth bravely.
The spiders' fort, renewed and furnished
again,
The head spider in the midst standing gravely,
And (for terror) on gibbets and gallows remain,
Flies thousands hanging, some in rope, some in
chain.

Th'ant, being brought before the spider to
speak, [break.
His mind (as followeth) forthwith he did
[The tail-piece as on p. 257 is here given in
original.]

¶Th'ant (in way of petition) suing to the spider
for peace, laying considerations to provoke him
the rather thereto, the spider doth attentively
give the ant hearing. Cap. 74.

[The plate as on p. 227 is here given in
original.]

[The plate as on p. 253 is here given in
original.]

RIGHT excellent uncle, if I, woeful wretch,
To call you mine uncle may here be so
bold,

Two things to pronounce plainly without far
fetch

Is my present purpose, first of which doth hold
Thanks, for saving my life; second to be told,
Standeth upon a request by petition
For peril, like the first in condition.

As thus : of life I am in like danger now,
As I was then (except your merciful aid)
The flies being bent to live and die on you,
To 'sault this castle afresh, they have purveyed,
And had been here ere this, saving that they
stayed

To hang me first, which hath no longer stay
But till I of peace bring them word, yea or nay,

No whit at their suit, but altogether at mine,
They respite my life till my return, to try
What good luck your good love to me may
assign

By inclination to peace charitably,
At my suit, for my sake, both to save thereby
My life, and as many of yours as shall,
In this fierce force, be clapped in the necks
withal.

And since your own estate ye can better weigh
What way is best (for you and yours) than I
can,
And that ye know the worst peace (as wise
wights say)
Is better than is the best war to scan,
As proof showeth partly here, since this war
began,
This considered, considering of your part here,
I leave off to consider mine own part clear.

First beseeching you with me, and for me now
To consider I am in this peril brought
By myself, for myself? nay, by you for you,
Without my seeking, by your own request
wrought;
And stinted reward, corruptly to be bought,
None ye offered, none I asked, nor none I have,
Nor none I sought, but your favour to vouch-
safe.

Secondly, your case erst arbitrated
I furthered (as far as my wit might force power)
Which showed so, when I the same iterated,
That I had words of thanks from the mouth of
your.
Thirdly, where chance of war was to me so sour
That I (for you) was captive and should have
died,
What (and how) things grew thereon, hear
them specified.

At the flies' first approach toward this assault,
To a tree they drew me, straight to hang me
there,
Asking of me, or laying to me, no fault,

But that I was your friend. In which deadly
fear
One fly, erst at th'arbitrament (as other were)
I prayed to speak, that I might speak ere I
died,
Which was at last granted, but first long
denied.

My tale there, stood on two intents in effect;
One, to save myself, another to save you
And yours. And therein to 'scape unsuspect,
First for myself, I laid that no fly could avow
That ever I offended fly ere now or now;
Praying them (thereupon) to hear and adjudge
me,
As might most equally stand with equity.


And for the safety of you, and of yours here,
To qualify the fierce fury of the flies,
All trembling terror that I could make appear,
That might discourage the flies in any wise,
That did I at the full to the flies' device;
Which wrought such effect and did their hearts
so pall, [nigh all.
That they cried for peace, and would have fled

But the chief fly staying them, then against me
Spake his pleasure there, as you did after here;
He saw and said to the flies that they might see
My counsel given them was against them clear,
And that I put them in fear to come here mere
Only for the love that I to spiders bear,
And to set myself at liberty from flies' snare.

Whereupon he moved, and they did consent,
That I should be sent hither as sent was I,
To tell a tale, to abate your fury bent;

Wherein if I brought you all as fearfully
 To fear them as I had brought them formerly
 To fear you, then should I be set frank and free,
 Or else (at my return), hanged straight should
 I be.

Here to prolong my life, nature provoked me,
 To make you afraid of them, somewhat to say;
 But yet again to that affection yoked me
 To reason so faintly, when that I did inveigh,
 That you (by reason) straight wiped that fear
 away;
 For which I was no sooner returned uneth,
 Ere I had (at the flies' hands) judgment of
 death.

 First at your request, for you, and not
 for me,

I came, craving no reward but your good-will;
 Second, in th'arbitrate case I wrought decree
 To the best for you, as far as I could skill;
 Thirdly, for your sake to death most vile or ill,
 I was then drawn, and am now drawing again,
 Except my grief some grace of you obtain.

That is, that it may like you to flies to grant
 Peace, such as despair give no cause to refuse,
 And pride give no cause it proudly to avaunt,
 But as measurable mean measure endues,
 So (of your grace) graciously them to use.
 This love toward my life, please it you to show,
 No reward else at your hands crave I to grow.

This ended, the ant made curtsey to the
 ground, [bowed.
 At which the spider gave him a beck, low
 But before he any word to th'ant did sound,

He paused solemnly, as any spider could.
Which done, very lovingly, but not very loud,
In manner assured and in words right grave,
First th'enter and then th'end of answer he
gave.



¶The spider (upon th'ant's tale told to him)
allegeth certain things by which he seemeth in
doubt much to grant peace to the flies.
Wherein the ant and he traversing somewhat,
anon he granteth peace to them under condi-
tion expressed, wherewith th'ant is brought to
the flies again.

Cap. 75.

[The plate as on p. 227 is here given in original.]

[The plate as on p. 253 is here given in original.]

C OUSIN ant, a long matter in short speech
 here,
 Ye have (as ye can) right wisely declared.
 Which, as ye grounded on three things to appear,
 To draw me to pity you, in case thus snared,
 So, this mine answer to those three prepared
 Hath in it other three things, two of which
 three [with ye.
 Stand sore-against ye and the third standeth

First, the harm (by wrong) that flies have done
 me;
 Second, my will to be revenged on the same;
 Third, the pity I have of you, I promise ye.
 Of two things between these three, which one
 to name,
 I can (as yet) no determination frame;
 Which is, one of these two to determine at end,
 Whether to slay all my foes, or save one friend.

Nay, whether to slay or to save foes and friend
 both,
 And whether to slay or save both you and
 yours. [goeth:
 On this question (quoth th'ant) this case rightly
 But peace saveth them and theirs, us and ours.
 War slayeth (or dangereth) all in short sharp
 showers.
 Ye save all in pitying me, the least one;
 Not pitying me, ye slay as seemeth every one.

But two of your three points last touched, hear
me touch,

Omitting the third, till I them have touched.
Of your harm, your will to revenge, as ye
avouch,

To th'one ill past, th'other ill to come,
couched :

When all is revolved, that can be avouched.

Your revengement to come, of the flies' ill
past, [cast.

May bring you more harm and the flies away

[Gg.i.r.

Yea, cast you and yours away too, I say it
may :

And (under your pardon) to speak my mind
Your desire of further revengement to weigh,

Declareth much cruelty in you to remain.

The least fly's ransom hath been loss of his
brain, [in sight,

That in time past hath touched here and now
Thousands of flies slain, and hanged in present
fight.

Thus for their ill, and your will th'ill to re-
venge, [be.

Your pointing of those two points disappointed
In that quarrel charity doth you challenge

In deadly defiance of all enmity.

Then passing these two points, to this third pass we—

Pity, whereby charity here to embrace,
Above all cases, pity this pitiful case.

And pity in you showed here now unto me,
Commodity to yourself I think shall gain,
If you (in this respect of pity) agree

To take peace with the flies, though ye loss
 sustain,
 My life to save in recompense of my pain :
 Hands and hearts of ants, old and young,
 great and small,
 To serve you in your need, ye are sure of all.

And contrariwise, if I here now go to wrack,
 Where you shall me slay, in that ye may me
 save,
 Not only friendship of all ants ye shall lack,
 But all creatures living shall you deprave
 And abhor where they speech or thought of
 you have;
 Against you (in this case) least mite in a cheese,
 In his most might will fight in blood to his
 knees.

[Gg.i.v.
 To this (all that I can say) what ye will do
 I humbly beseech you forthwith to declare.
 Life, or death, which one of two to trust unto,
 Is my deep desire, that I may now prepare
 My stomach ready, according to my fare;
 My mind, I mean, to die, or else to live,
 As your pleasure is, my death or life to give.

Cousin ant (quoth the spider) pity toward you
 And anger toward them, wrestleth in me sore.
 The flies' spite to spiders, to show what and
 how
 They have spited us from long before,
 Laying their faults on our backs, and evermore,
 By claiming our commons and such other like
 Slandering our titles, quarrels still they pike.

Sir (quoth the ant) faults on both sides I have
heard,

Which on both parts I wish to be mended,
The next way whereto, is peace to be preferred;
By war, no part mended, all parts offended.
War wasteth all things; where war is thus
bended;

In pity whereof, by peace all ills to mend,
Peace to all parts I wish still an end.

Well, cousin, chiefly, yea only for your sake,
In recompense of your pains at my desire,
Pardon I give flies, and peace thus shall they
take—

I will all flies out of hand hence to retire,
And that they in tumult no further conspire,
But that they clear dissolve this conspiracy,
And every fly flee home, to live peaceably.

[Gg.ii.r.
‡§‡ They shall now set you at liberty also,
Bag, and baggage, to go straight home frank
and free; [go,

And in this window and all, where my powers
Half the holes for theirs I grant to them from
me;

And the fly that this began, still here to be,
Standing upon his trial in consequence,
As standeth with reason, law, custom, and con-
science.

Which (as I promised him), I will perform.
This is your end. And flies, warn your fellow
flies,
To beware henceforth of these deeds enorm,

And by their harm here present, to wax so wise
That they never attempt more thus to rise
Against their beggars or betters, such as be
Placed thus above flies in authority.

Great God save you (quoth th'ant) quoth those
flies Amen.

Low curtsey they made, and away they flew
To the camp of flies, and there and then,
Presenting th'ant to them, about th'ant they
drew

With panting hearts, to perceive what would
ensue.

Wherewith the ant, at curtsey, with knees low
bowed, [loud.
These sweet words he began, in voice right



¶Th'ant declaring peace, as it is granted, the
flies in much joy set the ant thankfully at
liberty, and home goeth he. Whereupon the
captain commandeth all flies to draw near to
hear him speak ere they depart. But they flee
all away, a few except. Cap. 76.

[The plate as on p. 227 is here given in original.]

[The plate as on p. 253 is here given in original.]

PEACE and pardon I bring now into your
laps.

Upon these words spoken there was such a
shrill shout,

Holding up their hands, casting up their caps,
Such joying and rejoicing the whole camp
about, [rout.

As seldom hath been heard and seen, in such a
Long was it ere silence would fully be won;

But at last it was won, which done th'ant
begun—

Peace to pronounce, in form as it was granted,
And that it was granted only for his sake.

When he at end (to them) had it avanted,
And that he of his guard thither did witness
take,

They all of the same affirmation did make.

Straightway the halter taken from the ant's
neck,

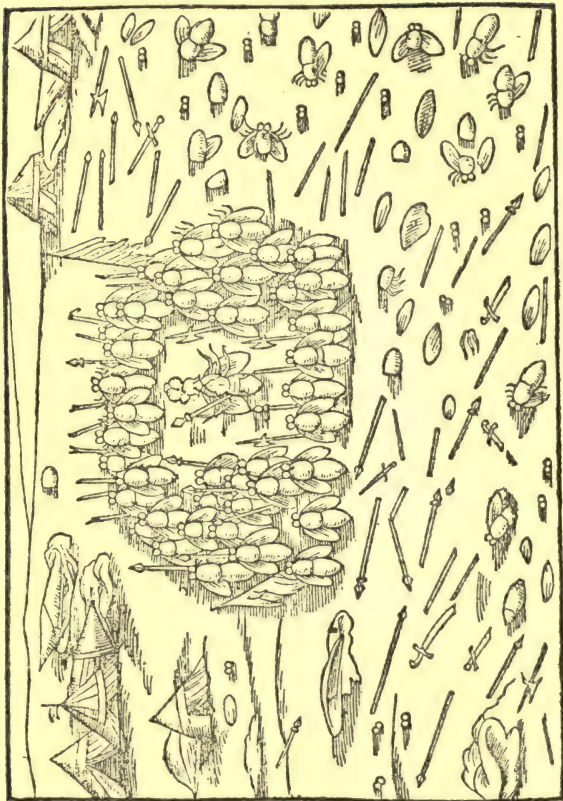
The captain fly gave th'ant a lovely low beck.

Praying him to let all hard handling past, pass,
And to consider that in number so great,

All be not one fly's brood, and woe he was,
That he had showed himself so ill, him t'en-
treat,

Desiring him it to forgive and forget.

Sir, quoth th'ant, forgiven and forgotten all is,
For my part, and ever shall be after this.



[The plate as on p. 220 is here given in original.]

HOW like ye this rudeness of these flies
(quoth he)?

As ill as any sight I have seen (quoth one).

Well (quoth another) it is no novelty :

Common sort of flies (in manner every one),

As gidds come and go, so flies come and are
gone.

Oft times when strifes are (by wrangling flies)
begun,

In the midst of the matter, away they run,

Leaving flies in the briers, whom they forced
thereto,

As they forced me; but I am this time taught
Against another time what I shall do.

And we (quoth other) thither forcibly wrought.
My mind (quoth the captain) was to have
brought

Our camp in order dissolved. Sir (quoth one)

Ye know they that know none order, can keep
none.

I told at first (those flies that forced me out)

Though I took (as I took and take) our claim
right,

Yet against our superiors to be stout.

To attain our right by force of furious fight,

A blind fly might see that out of the way quite.

Which would not be heard, but ere I again stir,

As I now stirred, I'll be hanged at mine own
door.

And we (quoth the rest). Friends (quoth the
captain)

I was not forced at beginning to come forth;

I rather forced other. But to be plain,

The gain in this journey seen, what it is worth,
And what danger this and like enterprise
stoorth,

I'll not stir thus again, if I may sit still;
And forced to stir thus, I'll stir with an ill will.

[Gg.ii.r.

Better smooth words to give than smart stripes
to take,

Namely, where stripes win nought and words
may win all;

Against the stream, strife again I will not make,
But take at spiders' hands, as in peace may fall;
I see what it is to spurn against the wall.

Home will I in peace, and in peace abide there,
Wishing peace th'instrument right to try each
where.

We wish the same (said the rest) all taking
flight [place.

From thence; nothing there left but th'empty
Whereupon the spider break up his camp quite.
Which done, I started up a speedy pace,
Looking out at the window, there to purchase
A sight (if I could) of the ant come home new,
What solemn salutations should there ensue.



[Gg.ii.v.
¶Th'ant being come to his molehill, solemnly
received of his wife and children, and a great
number of ants, he telleth to them all a tale
discoursing th'effect of all his trouble had
among the spiders and flies, willing them dili-
gently to mark what he sayeth. Cap. 78.



[Gg.iii.r.
OUT at a lattice hole casting mine eye,
A molehill I spied, as the emerald green,
The grass low laid, and, unto the window nigh,

Th'ant new entering the same, who, when he
was seen,

On so sudden warning, never was (I ween)
Such a number of ants as were on that hill,
To show outward tokens of inward goodwill.

At th'ant's first entry; a lane of ants was made,
Every ant by the way shaking that ant's fist;
And somewhat more than the midway of that
glade,

His wife met him, whom he full sweetly kissed;
His babes fell on knees, whom he devoutly
blessed.

Whereupon, all ants having that ant embraced,
These words said he to them, amid 'mong them
passed.

Dear kinsfolks, and allies many, and friends all,
What ye have heard of me since I from you
went, [shall

That know I not. But myself here report
Of my troublous tragedy th'effect fervent.

In telling which tale, mine effectual intent
Is that ye all shall now mark much what I say,
And all mark much more why I say that I say.

But what I say mark first. I think ye know all
That my young cousin spider was with me here,
To come to his father, my uncle, at call,
But the cause wherefore he willed me to appear,
Whether ye know or not, that know I not clear.
My knowledge whereof, to witness that ye
know,

In full and few words (as I can) I shall show.
[Gg.iii.v.

A notable fly hath late chanced to light
In that spider's cobweb, the spider by that
Charging the fly with desert of death by right;

The fly to deserve to die denying flat,
Beseeching the spider to hear him speak some-
what;
He granting him speech, and to judge his of-
fence
Standing with reason, law, custom, and con-
science.

The spider's challenge to the fly gave great
charge,
Whereto (as far as I could there understand)
The fly's defence was very lusty and large.
In which challenge and defence, when all was
scanned [hand;
To come to end, they two could not take in
But being driven to choose arbiters t'agree,
The fly chose a butterfly, the spider chose me.

This one of their many matters t'arbitrate,
At trial (by custom) on which side to lay
All holes, in that and all windows in each state;
The flies claiming freehold, for free passing
way;
The spiders for spiders said,—So, all hold they.
Whereon, we hearing all sides what could be
laid, [weighed
We could not agree how the case might be

To any one side of both; so that at end,
In our report (to that spider and that fly)
The case as we first found, we left it to depend,
The spider and fly in cobweb th'end to try;
Whereupon the flies, in a fume by and by,
Were suddenly up in a rought, on a rore.
Such a flock as I have never seen before.

No need to ask them wherefore their coming
was, [Gg.*iv.r.*] [fight;
Their warlike fashion showed them bent to
But in a moment about me they compass,
And, without word of cause declared, wrong or
right,
They drew me to a tree standing nigh in sight,
Where, with halter about my neck, on ladder
set, [get.]
Turn the ladder ! they cried, none other place to

Saving the foresaid arbiter butterfly,
Upon great and long suit, at last obtained
Of them to hear me speak before I should die.
But ere I spake (what to speak seeing unfeigned
Life or death lie before me), I was constrained
(As that short time would serve) to premeditate
How to conserve myself, and the spider's state.

As affection natural moved me more
To lean to the spiders than toward the flies,
And of my tale the very kernel or core
Must stand on two points (methought) in any
wise;

Th'one, to persuade no fault in me to surmise
Against them; th'other to make them to relent,
By enforcing the force of spiders' force bent.

In first part of which tale, my faults I cleared
That they (to touch me with) could any way lay ;
And where, by the rest of my tale, appeared
Their deaths plain (as I their foe's force did dis-
play)

They thereupon all well-nigh running away ;
I handling the tale so, from first part to end,
That the most part (simple flies) took me their
friend.

[Gg.iv.v.

But the crafty fly, capital captain,
Opening (to the flies) my politic intent,
Unseen to the flies till he made them see it
plain,
Himself seeing his danger above all bent,
If the flies did flee, their flight then to prevent,
He inveighed such matter to them that anon
He 'couraged them to stand, all former fear
gone.

Whereupon, with their consent, he awarded
That I before the spiders, a tale to tell,
Should be sent forthwith, with forty flies
 guarded;
Wherein if I made spiders fear flies as well
Or as much (in my saying serious or fell)
As I brought flies of spiders before in fear,
I should go quite; if not, at return hang there.

I said I would do my best, and therewithal,
Standing on the ladder, my two wings start out,
As in a time of our time is natural;
Which had, I flew guarded with this guarded
 route [stout.
Before the spider, having look strange and
But what of that? my curtesy once low made,
I used words my matter to persuade.

Where, although I would have told another tale,
Yet who may not as he will, must as he may ;
Life was sweet, death was sour ; nature did me
hale
To save my life, while my life in my tongue lay.
Short tale to make, in tale so did I there say
That spiders in fear of flies had agony
As much as flies of spiders had formerly.

[Hh.i.v.]

The one said that I by covenant ought to live.
Nay, said th'other, by covenant he ought to die;
The first said,—As words of covenant do give
To bring the spider in fear, even so did I.
Th'other said, that fear held not permanently,
And the words fulfilled, the meaning not fulfilled,
The covenant is not kept, in judgment well skilled,

This argument they turned and tossed till at last
The friend quite overthrew th'adversary;
And yet against me the most number straight passed
As though th'argument had run clean contrary.
On the ladder I stood, straight to miscarry
From which at turning off, by the fly hangman,
Hold! cried a fly far off, flinging toward us then.

Which fly said the spider had made a decree
The fly in close prison with him detained,
Should straight lose his life, if the flies did kill me;
Whereupon they reprieved me to prison chained,
With harnessed flies watched, and in stocks remained,
Between hope and dread, whether to live or die,
As this side, or that side, should win victory.

Forthwith herewith, on the spider they gave 'sault,
Where five hundred spiders and five thousand flies
Were slain. Abating on both sides courage

[haute,

The flies retired, peace some way to devise.
The spiders were desirous of peace likewise ;
But which part should begin suit, that peace to
move,
Both parts showed as much curtesy as little
love.

The flies had me before them bragging in boast
That since spiders to them for peace would not
sue, [crossed
Spiders or flies one part of both should be
Quite out of this life, none left alive to view.
And straight to the ladder again they me drew,
Protesting that I should die ere they marched
thence, [pense
I praying them my life might hang in sus-

While I were guarded again to the spider,
To sue to the spider, all in mine own name,
To see of what peace hap might be provider
At mine humble suit unto him for the same.
They granted, and sent me, to whom when I
came

I sued for peace, beseeching it the rather
For certain respects, which I then did gather.

Such as showed then high time peace to give
and take,

As danger to him and his, and then for me,
Most innocently cast away, for his sake,
Having, or looking, for no commodity
But only his favour; and hereupon he
(Seeming loth to grant, and glad to grant in-
deed)

Granted peace in form as forthwith shall proceed.

Under general pardon for all faults passed,
 The flies must all away, and all war surcease;
 I, set at liberty, no longer to lie fast;
 Flies in windows to have half the holes in
 peace;

The fly, with him in prison, not to release,
 But to take an end at his hands, there or
 thence, [science.
 As standeth with reason, law, custom, and con-

[Hh.ii.v.

But note I must take this done all for my love,
 In recompense of pain and peril had there.
 This done, I and the flies there, as did behove,
 Giving thanks and taking leave, thence gone we
 were

To the flies, who flocked about me giving ear
 To hear of peace, which when I there had
 declared, [guard.
 With thanks I was discharged of all captive

From whence I am (as you see) hither now
 come, [played,
 The one half of my whole tale having dis-
 For of what I have to say this is the sum.
 But now wherefore this what (now said) is said,
 As I at beginning willed this what well weighed,
 So wish I this wherefore to be weighed as well,
 For safety of all ants, which I shall now tell.

[The tail-piece as on p. 72 is here given in
 original.]

[Hh.iii.v.

¶Th'ant having said what he would say, willet
all ants to note why he said that he said.
Which is to warn them by his harms to beware
how they meddle in matters between spiders
and flies.

Cap. 79.



[Hh.iii.v.

W^ISE ants are warned by other ants' harms
(ants say)
And you, avoiding your harms by harms of
mine,
The why of my former tale ye then well weigh,

For of the what, that is the why, in fine.
Your hearing and following of which discipline
(With hearing and following my next words
here set)
Defence from my like harms I hope ye shall
get.

My which harms, though they show outwardly
to grow [own,
By war's froward chance, without fault of mine
Yet the high God knoweth, and my conscience
doth me show, [grown,
That these my harms of these my two faults are
Pride and covetousness, by corrupt blast blown
Into my heart inculked by fancy fond,
Which to warn you of, I'll make you under-
stand.

Though the spider sent for me ere I hence went,
Yet when I was sent for, proud was I to go,
Where I thought to grow in state more excel-
lent
Than any ant before had grown, and so,
Perking with spiders, in top of the window,
I thought therewith the spiders' equal to be,
And here, in anthills, ants a god should take
me.

And for the maintenance of that proud estate,
I covetously cast what way to find mean,
Being above all ants in place situate,
By preferment (at the spiders' hand) to glean
Office, fee, all that I could, to gather up clean;
Low courtsey, great riches, mirth, ease, love,
and laud,
I thought all should be offered, me to applaud.

[Hh.iv.r.

But in fine, this was the fruit of this vain hope :
Love, or laud, on no side; on all, hate and
blame;
For golden chain at my neck, an hempen rope;
For reverence and praise, disdain and defame.
Looking to win much, lose all, as in the same
Showed my reward, at end of all, at hands all,
Namely at spider's hands, who did me thither
call.

As he, in granting peace to the flies, showed
plain. [take
Which peace he said (I say) with flies he did
To save my life, and to recompense of my pain,
And for no cause else. But let us here make
As it indeed had been done all my sake;
Yet the head and tail of this tale, joined nigh,
Shall show that I right naught did win thereby.

What if to save my life that peace he then gave?
My life was out of peril till I came there,
Brought by him, for him, to the brink of my
grave.

Had I kept me here, neither peril nor fear
Had my heart wounded as it did there whilere.
This gift is like as if a thief (by false train),
Robbed me of my good, and gave it me again.

I lost my time there, and I lost my thrift here;
In summer (ye know) we ants work busily
For winter to provide our food every year;
But lack of this summer day's diligency
May make me fast two days in winter (haply),
And drive me (perhaps) ere winter all done be,
To beg of ants, that might else have begged
of me.

[Hh.iv.v.]

In all my which punishment at all whose hands
 I take them, but as the great God's instruments.
 His judgments are secret; he useth his wands
 Sometimes in appearance of outward intents
 To one purpose, when his high wisdom assents
 To use them for another, and sure
 I think he now put so my trouble in ure.

For my two said faults willing you to beware
 Of all ambitious and covetous desire,
 In avoiding (for my like offence) my like care,
 Which if ye do, fleeing desire to aspire,
 Then can ye this lesson as I would require.
 And not doing it, upon this warning given,
 Ye will thereto (by my like plague) to be driven.

And did we consider but this present life,
 Yet must we live in an order here (perde !)
 The God hath placed us all to live out of strife,
 Spiders, flies, and ants, each sort in their
 degree.

Spiders, in head parts of windows, the heads
 be;

Flies in the midst, the body as it were;
 Ants at the low part, the feet, accounted there.

And as a spider overmatcheth a fly,
 So is a fly as far too big for an ant;
 Which seemeth wrought by divine providence
 (think I),

As our degrees are in order distant,
 So the degrees of our strengths are discrepant;
 And where all three sorts keep quietly their
 place,

All live together in quiet wealthy case.

But if they (for change of place) begin to strive,
 As spiders and flies (two parts of three) did
 now,

They may hastily strive, and slowly thrive;
 And to the spider in our allegiant vow,
 In all lawful things, all we ants always bow
 Without grief or grudge; but if war again rise,
 What should ants meddle between spiders and
 flies?

Be warned here again (by my harm) of meddling.

Meddle we in things of our vocation;
 One fly's finger thrusteth ten ants down head-
 ling;

Ants are not made to walk in war's station,
 Nor to meddle in severe consultation.
 Meddle we in our molehills at the window's
 feet, [meet.

And let spiders and flies do as they think
 They shall for me, (quoth he) and for us, cried
 they;

And to their business busily they went.
 Wherewith come four flies fleeing, fast as they
 may,

And at low part of the window, by assent,
 They lighted, and the spider then himself bent
 From his house to his chair, and I forthwith
 Set in my place, of their words to note the pith.

[The tail-piece as on p. 38 is here given in
 original.]

[Ii.i.v.
 ¶Four flies (in the name of all flies) at the cob-
 web, thanking the spider for pardon and peace,
 declaring the conditions and the performance
 on their part, sue to the spider on his part to
 perform his grant, in laying out and possessing
 them of their limits with half the holes in the
 window, which he granteth, bidding them a
 little time stay, in which while he sendeth the
 youngest spider of his twain to the ant, pray-
 ing him to come to him again, to divide and
 deliver the holes to the flies as the spider will
 appoint them.

Cap. 80.



[*li.ii.r.*

ONE fly of those four (made the mouth for
all,
At curtsey to the spider had) these words had,
Framed in manner (to the matter) formal.
Right honourable sir, most dear and most dread,
All flies (they of your prosperous estate most
glad),
Have commanded us to commend them to you
Humbly, and duly as duty biddeth them bow.

So thanking your gifts to them, pardon and
peace,
Upon these conditions, as they understand :
Wars and conspiracies on their part to cease ;
Th'ant to be set free, out of their captive band ;
The fly here in prison to have end at your hand,
As standeth with reason, law, custom and con-
science ; [hence.
Half holes in windows theirs, all times from

Which covenants they receive, and put in ure,
In what they should do, and in what they shall
have.
They thereupon send us to know your pleasure ;
What time and what way ye will take to vouch-
save [gave,
To point and possess them in that ye them
Binding them (by indifferent divided rate),
To wish continuance of your present state.

At their curtsey made, to this the spider said :
This suit I grant : tarry my return again.
In he went, and herein to have the ant's aid,

To th'ant he sent the least spider of his twain,
Praying th'ant to come to him and take the
 pain
To be his deputy t'insess the flies, in fine,
With half the holes whereas the spider would
 assign.

[*Il.ii.v.*
Th'ant, spying his cousin coming, liked it not.
Some thankless office was toward again
 (thought he).

Through the window, I saw he quickly gat :
One leg and his waist in swadeband rolled to be,
And crutches by his side, a two or a three.
That spider coming to th'ant whereas he lay,
These, or these like words, that spider did first
 say.



[Ii.iii.v.

¶ Upon this message done, th'ant feigned a let of his coming by a hurt mischancing him that morning. With which answer the young spider returneth to the old.

Cap. 81.



[Ii.iii.v.

COUSIN ant, rest you merry. Cousin (quoth th'ant)

Ye be welcome; what good tidings do ye bring?
My father prayeth you (quoth he) at this instant

To come to him, and for the holes delivering,
Which he in windows granted at war's ending,
To be therein his deputy of trust,
To see flies possessed of their number just.

Good cousin (quoth the ant) it will not be.
In a dark house (right now) where candle was
light,
The light dazzling mine eyes, it so blinded me,
That against the snuff of a candle, burning
bright, [flight,
I flew, force of which fire and snuff in which
Mischance (that all misadventures always
bring), [wings.
Brake one of my legs, and burned one of my

So that I now can neither creep nor fly,
The which for mine own harm grieveth me
right sore,
And as sore for his sake, that now can not I
In this case serve him as I have done before.
Thus commend me, cousin; I can say no more.
That spider took his leave, and to his father
straight
Told what answer he had at th'ant in receipt.

Who, seeing the ant did not come, forth he
went,
With a long rod in his hand taking his chair;
Which' when I saw, to see further what he
meant,
To my chair in my place I did then repair.
The four flies before him stood in order fair.
Wherewith (in few words) a brief tale there
told he,
Which done, he possessed them in plat here
to see.

[*li. iv. v.*
¶The spider, after a few words to the four
flies, assigneth to them all the small holes
beneath, half the holes in number, but scant
the sixth part of the room. At which they
somewhat grudge; but they must take them or
none. Cap. 82.



[*li. iv. v.*
FRRIENDS flies,—friends, I say, if ye friendly
use me,
You four, and all flies your friend shall find me.
And to make you unable to accuse me
HEY. III. A A

In lack to perform as promise doth bind me.
Upon your present suit I have inclined me
To assign and possess you, here and elsewhere,
Of half the holes in windows where I power
bear.

Exempl'd by these holes, just half, as they
stand
Them, and none but them, to have and to hold.
Wherewith he pointed beneath with his wand
To all the small holes, saying what fly that
would [told,
Touch any hole there but those to them then
He should die therefore; which plat thus dis-
posed,
One fly (to the spider) these words disclosed.

Sir (may it like you) the meaning of all flies
Was to have, with half the holes, half the plat
here.
And I, fly (quoth the spider) meant otherwise.
Without further pleading, take as doth appear,
And think yourselves well handled; for this is
clear,—
I might (if I would), my grant again withdraw,
And that withdrawing justify well by law.

At time of this grant, I was (as who say)
Stressed by you, your prisoner (as it were),
And all bonds so forced, of no force are they;
Be answered and warn'd rebellion to forbear.
As every fly had had a flea in his ear,
At curtsey low made from the spider they slank.
They marvellous blank, and the spider as
crank.

What have we won now? (quoth one) as they
took wing. [Kk.i.v.

Wise flies say as good sit still, as rise and fall.
But what a fall have we now by our rising?
Before, we had some part; now we have lost
all. [shall.

In effect, yea (quoth one) this hath been and
Where flies (with spiders) in this kind of strife
strive,

We win nought but wretchedness; the craft
will not thrive.



[Kk.i.v.]

¶The four flies flown thence, the spider to the fly in prison layeth that in all kinds of trial that day on both parts laid, he thinketh his own part approved best, as he thinketh the fly would think were he a spider. Contrary judgment whereof the fly thinketh in the spider were he a fly. Whereupon they agree to change places (each for the time) to imagine and set forth other's part the best they can. Cap. 83.



THEY being thus gone, the spider sitting
still,

The fly fast before him, as he erst had been,
To draw to end, in hand with the fly he fill.
Fly (quoth he), now hast thou in this matter
seen

All kinds of trial that can be seen, I ween;
Reason, law, and custom, full reasoned and
cast,
Arbitrament, and rebellion at last.

Which rebellion (I think) thou didst devise,
When thou didst rown the butterfly in the ear.
Nay (quoth the fly) the truth is clear otherwise.
I prayed him to pray flies all war to forbear,
Which he will say. Fly, (quoth he) say he or
swear, [preef,
I trust none of you. This trieth truth like in
As to ask my fellow whether I be a thief.

But were it so or not, I forgive it thee.
In all this bibble babble had here this day,
What hast thou won thereby? that let us see.
All cases past here indifferently to weigh,
Weigh more on my side than on thine, I dare-
say. [would you,
I say and think nay (quoth he) and so think
Were ye a fly, in case as I am here now.

And wert thou a spider, as I am here placed,
I think thou wouldst think as I think, and to
grow

Some way to end. One trial more to taste,
Let us change places a while, for to know
What change of opinion that change may show,
I 'maging myself, to be a fly,
Thou thinking thyself, a spider unfeignedly.

[Kk.ii.v.]

Thou the spider, and I the fly to be named;
Thou reasoning for the spider all that thou
may,
And I for the fly in like case will be framed.
This take I (quoth the fly) a very good way.
Place and case (in appearance) forthwith change
they;
The fly solemnly set in the spider's chair,
The spider to the fly's base place did repair.



[Kk.iii.r.

¶ They having changed places, they allege each for his dissembled side. Wherein the fly anon is so allured to pride and ambition in occupying (for the while) the spider's stately place, that he at last with an oath affirmeth that spiders are owners of all windows. The spider, granting it true, starteth to the fly, seeming to take end upon the fly's own judgment.

Cap. 84.



[Kk.iii.v.

THE fly being once set in the spider's place,
Advanced himself, setting hands under his
side.

The spider crouched, in countenance mild and
base,

Looking pale and wan, as though he should
have died.

Which change (upon this sudden) when I espied,
It printed in me a wonderful wonder,
To see parties (from their parts) so asunder.

New matter they laid small, but that most
touched

That had been erst alleged, both parts growing
Little and little, stoutly to be couched
Each to other's, against his own part now
showing;

Namely, the fly for the spider's part crowing
With spiderlike spiteful words, as hot and high
As he had been the spider, and th'other the fly.

He was from the fly's part so carried away,
By being suddenly there thus elevate,
That all claim laid by the spider there that day
The fly ruled for right of most lawful right
rate.

So farforth he forgot where and how he sate,
That upon the chair-boll hard beating his fist,
Spiders own all windows, he sware by gods
blist.

The spider granted it true, starting out straight
To the fly, saying, Sir, ye have said right well.
We need no longer (for judge or judgment)
wait; [here tell.

Our chief point in judgment yourself doth
Oh, sir, (quoth the fly, and flat to ground he
fell) [had)

I beseech you hear how (by pride here now
I was stricken beetle blind, and bedlam mad.

[Kk.iv.v.]

¶The fly out of that chair fallen flat before the spider, perceiving his oversight and danger therein, he declareth how change of place changed his affection. In discoursing of which case, he partly toucheth the commodity of adversity, and the discommodity of prosperity, beseeching the spider to relinquish all advantage therein to be taken against him. Which the spider granteth.

Cap. 85.



[Kk.iv.v.]

THE spider, leaning to his chair, said:
Say on.
Sir, (said the fly) by vainglorious pride,
It stealing sly and suddenly me upon,

I was so puffed up here so blindly myself to
guide,
That I neither saw yours, nor yet my own side.
I, once but set in place of your authority,
Took myself straight in case of your prosperity.

Which place and case, how they may right
judgment blind !
That see I now, and never till now could see.
Wherein, I being but a shadow assigned
For this time to sit, yet mark (I beseech ye)
How from a fly's state to a spider's degree
I (at moment) advanced myself to proceed,
Not with flies, but with spiders, all I decreed.

My which blindness (in some respect) doth
stretch
To those in places past, as debitees,
They keeping countenance of my like high
reach,
Looking each as high, when he his suitor sees,
As his head master of far higher degrees.
Which flock (as I am now) wherever it flocks,
All made (in reason), reason's mocking-stocks.

See more, how beastly blindness did my bent
bend
Life and liberty of me, and of all flies,
Here lying and bleeding, except I it defend,
All that not withstanding pride bleared both
mine eyes
Against them and myself sentence to devise.
I was a spider, I ; I took flies as fleas ;
Pride goeth before, shame cometh after, me
to seize !

[*Ll.i r.*

But pride had here a subtle sly allurer,
Which the countenance of prosperity was;
Vain liking of which state was my procurer
To pride and blindness thereby, that here did
pass;

Which pride to present, prosperity is a glass,
As doth (on the other part) adversity
First procure and then present humility.

Prosperity (we see) made me forget clear
Myself, my matter, all flies, and also you,
Which, in adversity, I held in mind here.
To you, as duty required, I could there bow;
Reasons for me and all flies I could avow;
Our perfect sight from blindness standeth not
(I see)
In prosperity, but in adversity.

Which showeth in this one change of our two
places,
My place of adversity gave you such sight
That, in our reasoning of both our cases,
Your saying showed you to see the very right;
Your place of prosperity blinded me quite,
As I perceive it doth blind all in like case,
Save such as therein have especial grace.

In lack whereof I (thus graceless a minion,
Thus loudly and lewdly to lie) humbly pray
Neither my judgment, nor yet mine opinion,
Any word to be judged that I here did say.
But (as all lies should) let these vanish away.
Thou art (quoth the spider) a monster now
wox;
In mine eye a fly, and in mine ear a fox.

[Ll.i.v.]

Like a fox, wilily thou dost here devise
For helping of thy part and hurting of mine,
To take my lies true tales, and thy true tales
lies,
And further slandering me and my state; in
fine,
Thou hast here set forth this devilish discipline;
Pride hideth knowledge (sayest thou) by prosperity,
Humility showeth knowledge, by adversity.

As though captive caitifs saw all in misery,
And prosperous princes saw nought. But I see
Thou art in a wrong box for case presently.
The fly, seeing rightnought won hereby would
be,
But danger of displeasure, thereupon he
Passed over this argument, and upon that,
Said this to the spider, at his foot laid flat.

Sir, I beseech you my blindness showed here
last,
Forgive, and none advantage on me take
In any word of mine, against me there passed.
Fly (quoth he) I forgive thee for pity's sake.
To change places again, asunder they break.
Wherewith the spider, in form formal and
cold,
These words following to the fly forthwith told.

[The tail-piece as on p. 38 is here given in
original.]

[Ll.ii.r.
¶The spider, upon a glance given at his desert
of thank to be had at the fly's hand, allegeth
custom to be his warrant to destroy the fly,
which the fly cannot deny. Whereupon he de-
sireth that the case may be reasoned in con-
science. Which the spider now granteth.

Cap. 86.



[Ll.ii.v.
F LY, if thou canst use the reason that thou
hast,
Thou canst (and wilt) thank me in many re-
spects.
Never was there fly in cobweb thus placed,

That had the like favour in the like effects
That thou hast had ; but necessity directs
This to be true : in the day most long here past,
Yet they (evermore) ring to evensong at last.

As who say, things most long after beginning,
Yet must they (at last) needly come to an end,
Which after long time wrought to have in win-
ning, [pend,
We now shall win which end shall briefly de-
Upon one brief reason that I shall extend.
Which reason to confute thee, shall be so plain
That straight to yield thee reason shall thee
constrain.

Which lurketh (and I all this time have let it
lurk)
In custom, one principle of the four
On which pillars I promised should stand all
this work;
Which invincible reason I (to this hour)
Have kept, to hear (as I have heard) bran and
flour [lay,
Of all that thou couldst (this day) for thy part
Which (for full conclusion) hear me to thee say.

Custom, one chief post principal (as erst said)
Declareth, and hath declared, this six thousand
year, [stayed]
All flies (or any fly) in cobwebs (or cobweb)
However they come there, if they there appear
No reason in reason and law alleged here
Could discharge them thence, but straight there
cometh amain [brain].
A spider, who slayeth him and sucketh out his

[*Ll.iii.r.*

Here seest thou thy life lost, to begin withal
By custom, and for windows claimed in interest
For flies general, agreement general
(With their receiving it) an end hath expressed.
Th'end had I mean, upon rebellion sest.
But for thy life (by custom) canst thou ought
say

Why thou should by custom live? Sir (said
he) nay.

Well (quoth the spider) thou seest reason and
law
So yield to custom here, that in any trial
Those twain to conquer custom here we never
saw.

I have to this (quoth the fly) no denial.
What thing (quoth the spider) hast thou in
special
To help thee, beside law, custom, and reason?
Conscience (quoth the fly) I hope cometh in
season.

True (quoth the spider) now at end it hath
place; [lay
What hast thou (in conscience) for thy life to
Against accustomed custom in this case?
Enough (quoth he) if conscience bear any sway.
Yes (quoth the spider) be bold of that ye may;
That fourth shall have full place, as firm as
those three.
I thank you (quoth the fly); this showeth
charity.

[*The tail-piece as on p. 86 is here given in
original.*]

[LL.iii.v.
¶ They both lay sundry sharp reasons in conscience for the spider's life and death. But the spider in conclusion draweth these four principles (reason, law, custom, and conscience, which he at beginning granted to try all by) so to combine that he maketh thereby an appearance, to show the fly convinced; and straight by custom he giveth judgment of the fly's death, to which the fly yieldeth, praying to speak with twelve flies before he die. And it is granted. Cap. 87.



[*Ll.iv.r.*

BY conscience I claim here now (quoth the
fly)
In this place (till now place of mine imprisonment),
Not to be in prison, but in sanctuary,
Whereas charged parties be innocent
Of all such charged crimes as to them are bent,
There doth conscience in every place defend
Those charged parties, discharging them at
end.

If (quoth the spider) there were no difference
Between a fly innocent and arrogant,
Then must I discharge thee (even of conscience).

But if innocency on your part here want,
Then is this clause (for your discharge) no warrant.

But go to; make proof approbately appear
How ye prove yourself an innocent now here.

Sir, proof that I innocently hither came,
Appeareth in my known coming against my
will;

And since I came, that I an innocent am,
I hope your conscience (and I know your skill)
Will judge my fact here not ill or not so ill
Whereby ye (with conscience) can rightfully
Either kill me, or keep me here thus to lie.

What have I done, in conscience strait or large,
To make reason, law, or custom, bite or bark?
I lay and laid (quoth the spider) to thy charge

HEY. III.

B B

Breach of my house, not made with a thousand
mark.

No (quoth he) but one-quarter of one hour's
work, [pain,

Without one penny cost or one pin's worth
Re-edifieth your house in prime state again.

[*LL. iv. v.*

Which yourself may do, and must naturally;
That work is your talent, given for exercise;
In lack whereof, (by idleness) ye straight die.
But put case custom, my fact a wrong here
tries;

Yet how can conscience death or pain devise
To me, for that I to you occasion give
To work the work lacking which ye cannot
live?

Though (quoth the spider) by nature work we
must,

Yet is't neither conscience, nor our avail
To work in cobwebs, have we lust or no lust
At wagging (in cobwebs) of every fly's tail.
So doth it (quoth the fly) conscience likewise
quail

To hang a fly by the neck or by the neb,
For wagging his tail in a spider's cobweb.

This case is (in conscience) very much like
As a fish breaking a fisher's set net;
It set to take the fish and the fisher did pike
A quarrel to him, and would conscience set
To kill the poor fish. This were far and foul
fet;

And no fouler fetched than conscience set to be
To kill me for breach of this net set for me.

But did I maliciously do you much wrong,
 And some harm, as harm or wrong here ye
 have none, [strong,
 Yet shall your revengement show malice more
 If ye both detain and kill me thereupon.
 Come that wrong here in ure, conscience is
 gone [sworn
 As far from you as from him that had now
 The death of an innocent, but last might borne.

[*Mm.i.r.*
 You not offended (as ye will not, I hope)
 This last principle of these four, conscience—
 It giving me (above th'other three) full scope
 Of advantage as custom giveth assistance
 To your part, in present charge of mine offence—
 I must make my sheet anchor, to make my way,
 As you make (and I grant) custom yours (no
 nay).

Spare not (quoth the spider) that anchor sheet
 ought,
 The best thou canst therewith to take anchor-
 hold. [I mought)
 I thank you (quoth he) and would crave (if
 Your answer in conscience, full to unfold
 To one question of me, in few words told.
 Thy question (quoth the spider) propone thou,
 And mine answer to it, thou shalt have even
 now.

This is then, Sir, I put case, quoth the fly :
 My young master spider your son went astray,
 Wandering here and there (at adventure mean
 I),

Wherewith slily one laid a thing in the way.
 Whereat the babe fell, and it thus brought to
 bay,
 Th'other, for falling there, killed it out of hand.
 Think ye conscience would warrant this deed
 to stand?

Nay (quoth he) conscience is the doer of right.
 Mitigating fierce force of extremities
 That giveth or taketh right by rigorous might.
 Conscience (quoth the fly) my judgment so
 decrees, [agrees;
 And my case with this case in all points
 No difference between them, to be lost or won,
 Saving that I am not your mastership's son.

[*Mm.i.v.*]

For in like case put, I wandered about here,
 Innocently, as that innocent there did,
 And by these cobwebs, cast in my way thus
 near,
 In this babe exampling, I am exempl'd;
 Innocently as he was, I am masked.
 Think if I were your child, what ye could think
 then,
 Conscience, or no conscience, this to scan?

In faith, fly (quoth the spider) to tell the truth,
 No conscience (or hard conscience) I take this.
 Nay, no conscience (quoth the fly) truth so
 showeth,
 So that conscience on my side clearly is
 As custom is of yours; and ye know, I wis,
 That custom alone doth oft, and may ever
 Use judgment of abuse, and conscience never.

Well said, fly (said he) had I no more to say
To this that thou now saith than I have yet
said, [day.
Then hadst thou here won the victory this
But reason, law, custom, and conscience, erst
laid, [weighed,
How I granted thee hearing in those four
Thou shalt hear in few words, and we there-
upon
Shall the more clearly conclude this case anon.

The words of my grant t'adjudge thee, thus
they draw,
As standeth with reason, law, custom, and con-
science.

Not with reason, custom, conscience, or law :
 This *and*, and this *or*, fly, make much difference.
 That *and*, implieth all four placed in assistance;
 That *or*, importeth one, or any one of all;
 And here is the gap, fly, wherein lieth the gall.

And a point for flies' learning at spider's hand,
Though ye flies' learning above spiders' com-
pare.

But here learn of me, fly; this conjunctive,
Conjoineth these four said terms jointly to
prepare

Trial in this case, as they all may declare,
The tone with the tother, all in property
Knit best in knot of conjoined unity.

Well (quoth the fly) then conscience shall be
one.

Yea (quoth the spider) and custom another.
Sir, then will those two fall at a fray anon.

If they do, reason shall stickle them, brother,
 To make them agree where each impugneth
 other. [complete :
 But bring conscience, thy champion, armed
 How conscience challengeth custom let us weet.

Sir, I coming (as I came) unwillingly,
 And none offensive harm, in me doth appear,
 Conscience chargeth custom with tyranny
 In killing (or keeping) me innocent here.
 Which case, reason recordeth for case clear.
 This charge (quoth the spider) to discharge
 plain,
 Hear what custom saith to conscience again.

Custom saith : all windows are spiders' of right.
 Then conscience must say that flies have done
 wrong [flight ;
 Through windows (without leave) to take their
 To make conscience grant this, reason is
 strong. [long,
 Till spiders (quoth he) time present, and past
 Do prove windows theirs, as they never did
 yet,

Conscience and reason denieth this every whit.

[*Mm.ii.v.*

But admit we that all windows were your own,
 Flies (without your leave) passing offensively,
 Though custom allege for th'offence death here
 grown,
 Yet conscience (in this case) seeth death
 tyranny.

Reason granting it to show tyranniously.
 It were too much here to fine by the purse,
 But to fine by the poll, what fiend could poll
 worse?

Thou thinkest (quoth the spider) conscience
thinketh it strange
That flies by custom should die for this offence;
But conscience, with reason ranging in range,
In cause of custom's usage, as conscience
May have with reason herein full conference,
Reasonably reasoning this present case,
Conscience (by reason) shall give custom place.

I say (as I erst said) when a fly or flies
In this or any window in cobwebs light,
Any spider that within that window lies,
Shall kill him, and suck out his (or their) brain
quite; [right,
Which, begun by nature, custom followeth
Nature conceiving, but for this her sharp law,
Flies would have marred all for lack of orderly
awe.

And as nature in spiders wrought this defence,
So reason in man was driven to work the
same,

Cain's generation making resistance
Against all men that quiet order would frame,
(As you against us do) then those men to tame,
And defend the quiet in their quiet cause,
Reason to th'unquiet, gave our like sharp laws.

[*Mm.iii.r.*

But reason to them wrought not this to th'in-
tent

To catch them and kill them tyrannously,
But to save them, by terror in their eyes bent
To provoke them to flee th'occasion, whereby
They might flee their ill, felt thereby formerly.
Which as reason in man did (and doth) con-
sider,

So did nature in us both concur together.

Nature in us, reason (I say) so allowed,
 That this law of nature in us, laid on flies,
 Reason to man, for order in man, hath vowed.
 For breaking a wall by night man as soon dies
 As flies for cobwebs breach by day, which ex-
 ercise
 Conscience (by reason) not kicking at for man,
 Conscience (by reason) kicketh not at for flies
 then.

Reason in man worketh man to work (quoth the
 fly) [th'ill;
 Sharp laws more to save the good than to slay
 Nature in spiders worketh sharp laws cruelly,
 Not to save the good, but good and ill to kill,
 Only killing all on all to feed their fill.
 Thou liest (quoth he); we work cobwebs every-
 where
 To save flies by fear, cobwebs to forbear.

Thus reason hath conscience and custom
 agreed, [knows,
 Whereto law not repugnant, all the world
 Whereupon (without more parting) to proceed,
 Concordance of these principles here so shows,
 That here, hear thine end, fly, for here thine
 end grows.
 By custom (it aided with these other said three),
 Thy present death I presently here decree.

[*Mm.iii.v.*
 The fly fared as though he would have spoken
 more,
 But his heart wonderly fainted and failed;
 His judgment of death astonished him so sore,

(In that he saw his speech right naught prevailed

To be from death delivered or bailed),
That down he sank upon his knees and hands,
Requesting the spider in case as next stands.

Good master spider, since the case stands thus,
That die I must, folly were it for me here
To plead this case further; it passed by discuss;

All pleading or reasoning I give over clear,
Submitting and committing my life most dear
Into your hands, beseeching you, ere I die,
To grant me one petition; more crave not I.

That is that I (before you) my mind may say,
To twelve flies, which speech I promise faithfully
[weigh.

Either with you, or not against you, shall
I grant (quoth the spider). And by and by,
I know not whether by chance, or purposely,
A dozen flies about the cobweb's side placed
were, [there.

To whom this following the fly said then and



[Mm.iv.v.
¶The fly (to twelve grave flies for all flies)
giveth his advice for avoiding their perils by
their strife had in windows against spiders.
The great ground of which tale standeth most
upon consideration of these three things,—
wherefore they strive, with whom they strive,
and how they strive. Cap. 88.



[Mm.iv.v.
COUSINS and country flies, each one of
you all
Another myself, as each of all flies are,
I have (at suit), obtained you hither to call,

Minding my conscience to you to declare,
In such a time and such a thing to prepare,
As the time most meet to make you credit me,
And the thing most meet to you told to be.

First, as touching time, no time in my time
past, [frail]

When I was more prosperous (and so more
Than I this time am, yet all times, first and
last, [fail.

Your trust in my truth did not any time
But what time should credence set up so his
sail, [hold,

As this time, when life time shall no more time
But till time this my tale (to be told) be told?

In all sorts of sects of civil discipline,
Of all times in life of any fly, I trow,
In time of his known death, coming straight
like mine, [show)

Credence of his word (he fiend nor fool in
To credit his matter must that time most grow.
What vanity were this, in ought to devise
Lying now a-dying, to lie and devise lies?

Of all times for credit (I say) none like this;
And secondly, touching the thing here to tell,
Hearing thereof, no doubt most meet for you is,
Which thing is the strife of furious force fell
Between spiders and flies, wherein to expell
And kill all occasions in time to come,
Of my last will (in my last words) hear the
sum.

[*Nu.i.r.*

What way is herein best for spiders to take,
That can themselves tell much better than
can I;

I am a fly, no spider nor spider's make

To control the spider's part, but heartily
I pray the great God their hearts to mollify
As temperance may temper their claim touching
 this,
To give right, and take right, as most rightful
 is.

But in right of either part to determine aught,
What they for their part, or you for yours
 should have,
Shift that among you, for it foreseeth me
 naught. [grave.
Meseemeth I hear the mattock digging my
The Crown of the whole world, who it me
 now gave, [win,
His good-will must I thank, but for aught to
I take not the gift worth the point of a pin.

And where you (and all flies) are as sure to die
As am I now, your times to you unknown sure,
Advantage of you in my known death have I,
In having some time of remorse, to procure
Forgiveness of former life, led in lewd lure.
Where you may (without remorse) suddenly go,
And where the tree falleth there lieth it,—clerks
 say so.

But for profitable purpose towards you,
In purpose purposed to you here by me,
Your imaginations I pray to draw you now
Into my person, as in my case to be,
To work affection, to win effect in ye,
To conceive and receive things that I shall
 move,
Which to your behoof behovingly behave.

[*Nn.i.v.*

Three principles whereon my tale to contrive,
And to proceed upon, are these to prepose;
Wherefore we strive, with whom we strive,
how we strive. [thereof goes

Wherefore we strive,—ye know the cause
For holes in windows, which quarrels to dis-
close,

Our coming to them and going from them
sought, [nought.
Shall show our winning small, or rather right

First for our coming to them: who can dis-
scribe

How many flies have pressed possession to win,
That never could get possession alive.

But maimed and killed down right at their en-
tering in?

And such as do come in (where spiders do spin)
Most wise fly devising to sit there most fast,
May think his first hour (or each hour) there
his last.

Few flies (I think) have 'scaped longer here
than I, [and fear,

My which time being spent between hope
Yet at last (for all my shifts) lo! where I lie,
Where no ransom my redemption may rear,
But my life remediless I must forbear.

Come with danger, bide with fear, depart with
death,—

Too hasty a journey to take with one breath.

In this said first principle, what we strive for,
Commodity therein proof doth thus witness,
The more flies have of it, flies' danger the
more;

The less flies have of it, flies' danger the less.

Then is no whit best, for who doth aught possess, [ware
Each pennyworth of pleasure of such possessed
Bringeth more than counterpoise of danger
and care.

[Nn.ii.r.
Beggars flies before thieves flies may sing (we
say) [see)

Rich flies before true flies here do weep (we
The richest winning fly in windows to weigh;
If any winning there, any riches be,
As the best thing won there is but fly's liberty.
What is the winning, won and kept with such
strife,
That hourly winneth death or deadly fear of life?

It is a winning better lost than won,
And so these windows are, wherefore we strive.
With whom we strive now, secondly to run?
With our biggers to contend, we here contrive
A match as much unmeet for us to thrive
As may be matched for two things here to try—
First thing their power, most thing their policy.

To their much power, our power, oft times
thought more
By number, many small making a great,
Their policy (keeping their power in store)
Hath most times erst brought us ourselves to
beat.

What winning is in this matched match to get?
None; wherefore with whom we strive (I think
it best),
To leave off strife, and live by loss in rest.

Now thirdly, how or in what manner we strive.
To tell plain truth, in my worst time to lie,
Spice of rebellion our strife showeth to con-
trive.

Spiders are placed above, superiorly,
And flies beneath them placed inferiorly.
Then may it seem, as they above us have
place,

So have they above us like rule in like case.
[Nn.ii.v.

Which case granted, in striving against them
thus,

Our matter standing in state of most right,
Yet is our manner wrong and seditious.
No law alloweth flies to win their right by fight
Between private flies, and law inhibiteth quite
Any flies to fight against their high heads,
But rather suffer, as obedience leads.

Wherefore we strive, ye see trifles they are;
With whom we strive, their policy passeth our
power;

How we strive doth sedition declare.
Three parts without melody in the part of
our. [sour,

Our part hath a face here no crab more
To move flies (henceforward) to turn their faces
From strife with spiders, in quarreling cases.

To which, you drawing your imagination
As though ye stood in my state at this present,
Your own consent must give confirmation
My words herein past to have a true extent,
And further the sheet-anchor experiment.
What ye lost at spiders' hands, late before
this,

A full ratification of my tale that is.

And if that any fly will demand of me
 What mean flies may use best their right to
 obtain,

Mine answer is : not in harness *cap-a-pie*
 Besieging ('stead of beseeching) to constrain ;
 Not stir with every fly stirred by bedlam brain,
 Sturdily standing with bills in foul fighting ;
 But humbly suing, with bills of fair writing.

[Nn.iii.r.]

By aught (in any law) that ever I wist,
 Thus may flies sue for right, and not only may,
 But sue so flies must, forbidden to resist
 Their higher powers by violence (any way) ;
 Which way not helping flies, their way is to
 pray

Unto the great God to work spiders consent
 To give and take right in right rated extent.

But further (in this case) where any flies go
 Of long time, of late time, and this time is seen,
 Yea, seen, heard, and felt, in our present
 wrought woe,

That we are wrongdoers, and ever have been.
 Our works herein witnessing so, that I ween.
 No fly so foolish but he doth understand
 Our harm for wrong working we have at God's
 hand.

This to be true I think and have thought,
 Which (master spider) may suspicion clear
 In your suspecting me for late tumult wrought.
 But on my death I take (which I shall take here)
 I never avowed (nor allowed) to draw near
 Any number by lawless usurped powers,
 But as peaceably stood with God's peace and
 yours.

But for fine : friends, in your beholding my
 death
 As th' image of your own deaths plainly to pur-
 port, [eath
 In that one hour's quarter ye are sure un-
 To 'scape the same, to get aught by power
 extort,
 Or get or keep aught in any wrongful sort,
 That sight, with thinking of my words in the
 rest, [surest.
 May henceforth of strife here bring your side

[Nn.iii.v.

Behold your deaths in me, by uncertain life;
 Behold your dread in me, your lives' account to
 make; [endeth your strife;
 Behold wherefore ye strive, and that death
 Behold with whom and how ye strive (as I
 spake); [take;
 Behold the losing gain, that winneth loss to
 Beholding these winnings, with the jeopardies,
 Showeth holes in windows (to behold) vanities.

And so all holes in windows to take and use,
 That none offensive strife flies' abuse procure,
 But peaceably, as due obedience indues
 To put having or craving of right in ure,
 This crave I of you for love to you most pure.
 And thus (praying you to pray for me at end),
 To the Almighty Lord my spirit I commend.

The flies (unto these words) no word could
 speak,

But yielded tears, like drops in April showers,
 Saving in outcry, as they thence did break,

HEY. III.

C C

They cried, Farewell, of flies the flower of
flowers. [hours;
But well the last hour hath no following
The hour is come wherein the fly must die,
For which he waiteth, at spider's foot pro-
trately.



[Nn.iv.r.
¶As the spider is about to kill the fly, the maid
of the house cometh in and striketh down the
cobweb and the spider to the ground. Cap. 89.



[Nn.iv.v.
THE spider toward the fly furiously draws,
And being stepped to the fly, staying in
stop his paws,
As he would have pierced the fly's head with
The maid of the house to the window did chop,
Setting her broom hard to the cobweb's top;
Where, at one stroke with her broom stricken
round, ground.
The cobweb and spider she struck to the
[The tail-piece as on p. 154 is here inserted in
original.]

[Oo.i.v.

¶The maid being at point to tread the spider to death, the spider prayeth her to hear him speak ere he die, and then to adjudge him justly, the maid granting to use him (as he did use the fly) as may best stand with reason, law, custom, and conscience. She at his request (for the time) withdrawing her foot, they fall to reasoning of the case.

Cap. 90.



[Oo.i.v.

THE maid, by mine absence to be the more
bold
To work her will, as she came in, I went out,
And looked in at the window, her to behold.

She swept down the cobweb; the fly flew about
The parlour round, never more lusty nor stout;
The spider on the ground, under the maid's
foot,

To tread him to death, and was about to do't.

But the spider (on knees) lift up his hands high,
Beseeching her, of mild maidenly pity,
To be content to hear him speak ere he die,
And to declare first what he had done, and then
why

He did those deeds, and so to judge him justly;
And that she would (in meantime) her foot
withdraw,

Sight whereof made his head ache, and his
[stomach gnaw.
To banish (quoth the maid) all partial pretence,
I'll hear and judge thee, as thou didst the fly
hear,

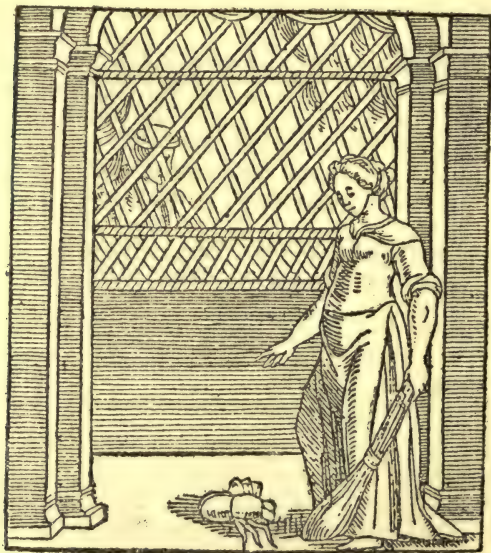
[science,
As standeth with reason, law, custom, and con-
So shalt thou have good, bad, high, low, far
or near;

And since fear of my foot abateth thy cheer,
Lest thou might'st take harm, of thine own
conceit

That I withdraw. And so withdrew it straight.



[Oo.ii.r.
¶In reasoning of both sides, the maid driveth the spider to grant himself convinced (by custom aided with the other principles erst said) as he convinced and adjudged the fly before. Whereupon she (by custom) decreeth the spider to die, he then desiring to speak with his son and his council, which the maid granteth. Cap. 91.



[Oo.ii.v.
FAIR and good mistress, maidenly maid
(quoth he)
Leaving the brim to the bottom to wade,
What deeds I have done here you have seen
and see;

Which are the cobwebs in windows here made
Of all spiders the natural trace to trade;
Which to be impugned we never heard nor
saw,
In reason, custom, conscience, nor law.

Spider (quoth the maid) know ye that I heard
All this day between you and the fly here said;
Wherein I saw the cause wherefore ye jarred
Was not for that the cobwebs here wrought
and laid, [thus weighed:
But for the place ye wrought them in as
You to build in top and top-side, the fly held;
You held the whole yours, in all places to
build.

The fly held that all flies hold all holes in free-
hold;
You (for all spiders) held that freehold all yours.
In reason, law, and custom, each to other told
Your minds in this matter (at least) five long
hours. [powers
At end whereof, it passed both your wits and
To take end yourselves, but were driven to
devise
Arbiters, to take an end by compromise.

Which matter, as both sides writhed it and
wound it,
Your arbiters there, the ant and butterfly,
Were driven to leave it at large as they
found it.
Whereupon ye finally burdenously
Burdened the fly with custom, thereby to die.
Which he could not deny, and for his defence,
He got the case to be reasoned in conscience.

[Oo.iii.v.

Wherein (by nature in you and reason in man),
Ye set a discourse, reasonably sounding,
With reason and conscience that custom to
scan.

Whereupon appeared infallible grounding
To bring the fly justly to his confounding.
And had not been your usurping in this place,
Conscience with custom had stand in this case.

Custom granteth, and conscience not denieth,
Disturbing your cobwebs wrought in top post,
The fly (for th'offence) accustomable dieth.
But cobwebs upon cobwebs, purled in each cost,
All parts of windows to be so embossed
That no fly can pass without death's interrup-
tion,
Conscience construeth that custom corruption.

In taking the fly's part here, I take mine own;
I being maid of the house, my charge it is
To see cobwebs corrected, thus overgrown,
And so will I do, spider, be sure of this.
Well (quoth the spider, if I have done amiss,
Redress mine ill doing, and let me go free.
Nay, nay, spider (quoth the maid) that may
not be.

Swept I these superfluous cobwebs now hence,
Letting thee pass in this window to remain,
Custom hath so corrupted thy conscience,
That where is now one cobweb, there should
be twain. [plain]
Well (quoth he) since ye like not (as appeareth
What I have done, yet hear why I have done it,
Which shall (I hope) appease your ire every
whit.

[*Oo.iii.v.*

The why (or wherefore) I did that I have done,
Was that flies (beyond number) did here resort,
Blowing meat here (raw and roast) beyond the
mone. [speech short
Which wrought your master and mistress in
To rebuke you sore, to your deep discomfort.
Which to redress, I, in pitying of you,
Set nets to catch flies, as I do now.

Here is (quoth the maid) one truth told, and
one lie. [blown,
That flies have my meat here outrageously
That is truly said, and it for true grant I.
But that thou didst set nets here, all over-
grown, [own,
Aught for my pleasure, and not all for thine
That's a false tale, to which policy thee draws,
To win favour at my hands, clear without
cause.

But were it as true as it is false, yet thou
And thy family do me displeasure more
Then pleasure in this, for your nigh approach
now
Is to my master and mistress an eyesore
Above the flies blowing by degrees a score.
They both loathe less to have, be it flesh or fish,
Ten flies in their meat, than one spider in their
dish.

And in their dish wouldst thou and thine surely
be,
If I (rather too late than in time due)
Took thee not up, as is my charge in duty

Executing mine office, did I eschew
 To correct such pride in thee as never grew
 In spider erst, than my master and mistress
 Of my rebuke had just cause of increase.

[*Oo. iv. r.*

And hadst thou been never so serviceable
 In doing thy duty in many things right,
 Yet this thy usurpation abominable,
 Hath drowned thy thank of those due done
 deeds quite,

Which is to be witnessed, in all the world's
 sight. [weighed

All reasons in law, custom, and conscience
 Against the fly, are now against thyself laid.

And as thou madest custom thy sheet-anchor
 chief, [science),
 (Conjoining thereto reason, law, and con-
 Of the fly's death (by right) to make perfect
 preef

From first age of the world had in consequence;
 So bring I custom, fetched like far time from
 hence. [brain,

Custom is thy warrant to suck the fly's
 Where to mark how custom warranteth me
 again.

From the beginning it is th'accustomed guise,
 When spiders in windows their cobwebs so
 make

That they too far offend their beholder's eyes,
 The maid of the house with her broom, at a
 strake, [spiders take

Sweepeth down those cobwebs, and those
 Under her foot, and for any intercess

Those spiders (with her foot) to death she doth
 press.

Which custom is underdropped (as I said)
With reason, with law, and with conscience,
for me [laid.
As strongly in my case, as for thee in thine
Now speak, spider; canst thou deny this?
(quoth she)
Nay, forsooth, I cannot deny it (quoth he),
But am driven to grant it, and even so I do.
Your merciful hands I commit me into.

Thou shalt have (quoth she) mercy even as much
[*thine.*]
At my hands, as the fly should have had at
Cast off all vain hope, since thy fortune is such,
Thyself framing fortune to thy this ruin.
Make patience thy salve for this sore, in fine;
And make thee ready, spider, for finally
I assuredly assure thee thou shalt die.

The change of his cheer at these words made
me see [make.
How the dread of death could lambs of lions
This lionlike spider, erst fierce as could be,
Fear did all his fury full far then aslake.
His heart in a pursenet was easy to take.
Change (by chance) brought him at twinklę of
an eye,
From twig top of the tree, at the root to lie.

These two things are meet things (as methinketh) to note—
The spider right now so high, even now so low ;
The fly right now at ebb, even now afloat,

The trump of his fame never so high did blow
Th'other's trump of shame, as high in sound
doth show. [blew this blast :
Which blasts of which trumps (in mine ear)
Fickle fortune will never leave her old cast.

But to the matter : the spider prayed the maid
To speak with his son and heir before he died,
And with his counsel. She was content (she
said)
Chance being messenger, chance thither
straight hied [side.
His son and twelve counsellors hard by his
Whereupon he there and then discoursed his
mind,
In matter such as ye next this may find.

[Pp.i.r.]
 ¶The spider to his son and twelve spiders
 giveth his best advice for most quiet and best
 governance, his tale standing most upon these
 three terms,—first, a declaration of himself;
 second, an exhortation to them; the third, a
 submission for himself, whereunto he desireth
 licence to take his child in his arms, now at
 their departing, which the maid granteth.

Cap. 92.



[Pp.i.v.]
MY dear child, my near friends, and coun-
 sellors late,
 My short time not allowing long talk with you,
 When I would most long and most deeply de-
 bate

Mine estate past and present with you all now ;
 My talk most short and thereby most slight
 t'allow,
 I must, and (since I must) will devise to tell,
 Charging my child, and praying you, to weigh
 it well.

This short tale, shortened by short time (as I
 say),
 For a ground of firm framed foundation,
 Upon these three principles I will here lay.
 The first, of myself, a declaration ;
 The second, to you, an exhortation ;
 The third, for myself, a submission
 For remission of my ill condition.

First, I declare and confess my former life,
 Chief in time and place of mine authority,
 To wring to the worse (by right or wrong in
 strife)
 All flies or spiders that would stand against me.
 Their destruction was my felicity ;
 My displeasure, as I used it in quarrel,
 Was as judgment of death, or deathlike peril.

Mine ambitious desire, here to declare :
 In winning in windows, no one so nigh all
 (Which I might have kept quietly to my share).
 When my winning was most, I thought it too
 small.

The shooting at all was my mark principal ;
 And now, shooting at all, I have lost all quite.
 The mean is the merry part, being sung right,
 [Pp. ii. r.]

And of the two extreme parts (as I take it)
 The base is better than the treble to sing.
 Treble prosperity, reason doth make it

Worse than base adversity, it approving
In the fly's bass and my treble state erst mov-
ing.

Prosperity, (as that fly said) maketh us blind;
Adversity, (I feel) giveth sight by kind.

When I had all that could well-nigh be got,
Restraint of liberty had been my hell pain;
Now I have naught, I were content with lot
To sit and beg, fast locked in a chain;
I never to obtain more estate or gain,
But only life and living, such as would
Maintain a beggar's life, basely to hold.

But life, liberty, lands and all, must I lose,
And I confess me to lose all worthily;
Every wight is worthy to have as he does.
Lands, life, and goods of many flies had have I,
And now must I leave life, lands, and goods,
semblably.

This long-learned lesson I late had forgotten;
Our measures meet to other, shall to us be
motten.

But in this measure, hear me measure right
How wrong judgers, wrong judgments in this
text lay.

Some expound it so largely, that in their sight
Where authorised judges punishment weigh,
Measuring harm to harm doers th'ill to stay,
If any ill come to those judges eft soon
That judge th'ill to be done, for th'ill to them
done.

[Pp.ii.v.

But those judgments grow of this condition:
Malice arrogant, or ignorance insolent,
Mothers of erroneous exposition.

This text hath a limit : how far it hath bent
Such harms as chance judges, or such as assent
To procure punishment to such as are nought,
Those harms unto them for that are not
wrought.

Judgments of the great God are secret, we know :

A judge using justice, of just true dealing,
The God may punish, for other things that
grow, [vealing)

Which he knoweth, and we know not (by re-
And ofttimes the good, their glory ensealing :
He punisheth some here, as standeth with his
will,

Whose measures he knoweth, (of man's
measures) least ill.

But for such false measurers as I have been,
This measure is made, and duly put in ure,
At hands of the great God, oft directly seen,
Right measure meting, for wrong meting
measure. [cure]

And (ofttimes) he doth his instruments pro-
As now this maid right measurer to me is,
As I to other have measured wrong ere this.

This declaration, one part of these three,
What I have partly been, hath made you hear
Whereby what case I am in, here you see.
Which sight and hearing may be mirror clear
To look in all times of the day and the year,
For spiders high and spiders underneath
To keep with life, that I have lost with death.

And so to do, I shall you all exhort.
And first, my son, mark mine advice to thee,
(That shall succeed me straight in place of
such port,

As I first began in superiority)
In few words, which smart shall time limiteth
me.

For the which while, my child to me most dear,
Thy weeping leave, and lay thine ear to hear.

Those things that thou hast heard me here
declare,

By which thou seest thy father cast away,
To save thyself (my child) see thou prepare
To flee the same by temperate steady stay.
The contrary of my demeanour aye
Shall aye defend thee so in every case,
As thou, both loved and dread, shall keep thy
place.

Against my subtlety, use thou simplicity;
Against my wrong usurping, use thou right;
Against my pride, use thou humility;
Against my wrath, use charity in sight;
Against my hate, in love have thou delight.
Against these ills, and other following me,
Note these next ills, not to follow, but to flee.

Where truth is taken treason, and traitors in
trust :

Where faith is framed fancy, and fancy feigned
Where losels over lords lay laws at their lust :
Where witless as wisest the witty outweigh'th :
Where mercy to the meek mere malice dis-
may'th :

Where dawcocks in doctrine have domination,
There doth division bring desolation.

[Pp.iii.v.

Let truth be the badge, in whom thou trust
dost take;
Let not firm faith be left for fickle fancy;
Let ruled lords rule ruleless losels, when they
crake;
Let wise wisdom overweigh witless folly;
Let malice pass, use measurable mercy;
Let th'unlearned in doctrine to the learned give
place;
Let pastors be placed, as I place them in case.

In place of a shepherd, place not a sheep ;
In place of a sheep, place not a shepherd ;
In no place place a wolf, the flock to keep,
The sheep or the wolf to the shepherd's place
preferred; [marred.
By faintness or fierceness the flocks must be
Place thou thy shepherds such shepherds to be,
As from the sheep and wolf, use the mean
decree.

Offenders penitent (for offences passed,
Saving of whom offendeth not the standing
state,
Nor encourageth other to offend the more fast)
Correct, as mercy may rigour moderate.
But to this make this a ground inviolate,—
Upon sturdy stiff standers in violence,
Draw thy sword of justice, sharpened sharply.

And mark (my son) these points that I now
come to,
In common order, of thy governing.
Who honestly doth, as other honest do,

And faith as those honest say, or saith nothing,
Ask him not what he thinketh, for mark this
o'thing :

Whose deed and his thought repungnantly
vary,

His word and his thought jar likewise contrary.

[*Pp. iv. r.*

Love to be loved, and hate to be hated
Of those that love good and hate ill ; otherwise,
Having hate of th'ill, for justice justly rated,
Hate so be thou glad to have, and by justice
Continue that hate in incessant size.

In whom (by their faults) to thee faultless it
draws

To continue by their continued cause.

Touching right or wrong, of both must thou
choose one,

As thus : either to do wrong, or to take wrong ;
Rather take it than do it ; see thou do none.

The wrong that I have done (the flies here
among)

Of mine ill, their ill hath been partly along.
Answer mine ill all (alas) straight must I do,
And as much of theirs as mine hath forced
them to.

Of spider or fly sued to for aught in grant,
Ere thou grant, look what, where, and why
thou grantest it ;

But grants once passed thee (at suitors' suites
instant),

Perform them full, without restraint any whit.
Performance of promise perfectly doth knit
Such credence to all (they performing the same)
As winneth them fast friendship and perpetual
fame.

Thy counsel choose, in these conditions bent,—
Few, wise, secret, expert, temperate, and true,
Satisfied with sufficiency, and diligent
All sale of justice and all offers t'eschew
That shall to thee or commonwealth hindrance
 brew;
Their taking whereof, seeming winning to be,
May lose them with all theirs, and all thine
 with thee.

[*Pp. iv. v.*]

Here have I given thee, son, such exhortation
As weak wit and short time will suffer in me;
Which if thou use at thy father's contempla-
 tion,
Behold then (my son) thine own prosperity.
If not, behold thy father's adversity
As rightly and rightfully on thee to light,
As on thy father, thou seest it now light right.

Now to you of his counsel, mark what I devise.
In you, lieth the putting in ure of all this;
You are his hands, his feet, his ears, and his
 eyes;
Hearing, feeling, or seeing, in him small is
To walk or to work with, you working amiss.
You are the mirrors that all lookers look in;
As you work, they work, but you must first
 begin.

In which work, this walk, I exhort you to
 take

Walk in amity, work in unity.
The answer of suitors, expeditely make;
Search their subjections, how they may agree
To be granted, with honourable honesty.
Offenders against you, when ye will challenge,
Never draw his sword your quarrels to revenge.

These be the great grounds presently brought
in mind,

They passing two parts of my promised three.
Me to declare, you to exhort, in such kind
As may show cause of repentance in me
For ills past, and for th'ills to come in ye
Warning to avoid. Thirdly and lastly now,
To witness my submission, I shall pray you.

First to the great God I humbly and wholly
Submit me, even so beseeching his mercy
For all my great sin and all offensive folly
Against him committed. Secondly,
Of all the whole world here I generally,
Ask forgiveness, where and in what mine of-
fence

To crave forgiveness chargeth my conscience.

Thirdly (and specially), good mistress maid,
Your displeasure toward me to bring appeased,
I pray your benignity to be displayed
To forgive my guilt, which hath you displeased,
And not only displeased, but diseased;
Namely, now in straining your arms long and
small,

To cleanse your window of uncomely cobwebs
all.

Fourthly and finally, remission sought,
By submission, to all spiders and flies
That I in this window have offended aught,
In taking or giving the holes in such size,
Or stretched my cobwebs here in such wide
wise

As straitened any part of their lawful right;
Of them, on knees, I pray forgiveness in sight.

Here end I, saving six words here to be said
Unto my child; I, (him in mine arms having)
Pronounced in your hearing (good mistress
maid)

Your licence whereto is mine humble craving,
Without word of any ill in depraving.
Content (quoth she); wherewith in arms he
took him,
Saying these words, while she did overlook
him.

[Qq.i.v.
¶After a few woeful words of the spider had
to his son (they both clasping each other in
arms very naturally) he kisseth and blesseth
him. Wherewith that son, with all the twelve
spiders, dolefully depart from the spider.

Cap. 93.



[Qq.ii.r.
O H deep desired sight, of thee my child
dear,
Behold thy father, how he beholdeth thee !
To thy mother, and brother, thou shalt appear,

After this weeping time, worn out of you three,
To your comforts oft-times, but no time more
to me.

Our departings differ; nothing more unneath
You from me to life, I from you to death.

Now here in sight, as I should never be hence,
Straight hence from sight, as I had never been
here.

Well, farewell; use to thy mother obedience;
To thy brother, let brotherly love appear;
Commend me to them both (my jewels dear).
I bless thee; kiss thou me. They did so, and so
Loathly he loosed his arms, and let him go.



[Qq.ii.v.
¶The maid (appearing as woe to destroy the
spider as he is to be destroyed) with her foot
presseth him to death. Cap. 94.



[Qq.iii.v.
THE water ran down the cheeks of them
both two;
The maid, pitying both, wept as fast they;
But for that she must do more than she would
do,

The spider had been forgiven, and gone his way.

But they gone weeping away, without delay,
The spider lying prostrate, she thereupon,
Setting her foot on him, he was forthwith gone.



[Qq.iii.v.
¶The maid hath before her the twelve spiders
and the twelve flies that had been before in
place. And upon her show that all harms done
by those generations is grown by disorder, she
finally deviseth full redress in pointing them to
grow to order. Cap. 95.



[Qq.iv.v.
UPON this execution done, she hath now
Before her these twelve spiders with those
twelve flies
That erst were there, they erst mentioned to
you;

Unto which number she did there devise
 Certain precepts given in words weighty and
 wise,

Which to repeat, as rightly as I can,
 I will; and in this wise her tale began.

To train the time and tarry you (quoth she)
 In talk of your forefaults, folly it were.
 The smart both doth and will still tell it ye.
 But what thing brought that smart, each when
 and where?

That here to hear, each one lay to his ear;
 Which thing briefly to tell, brief end to forder,
 Was only in you all this thing—misorder.

As God orderly created creatures all,
 So were they created, to orderly intent,
 To use themselves, each creature in his call.
 Of which created sort the creator meant
 Spiders and flies twain, to order to relent.
 The lack whereof on your sides witnesseth well,
 To have wrought displeasure on all sides every-
 deal.

On all sides I say, meaning these sides thereby
 Your sides, my side, my master and master's
 side.

First for your sides, the smart sheweth feel-
 On my side, such rebukes as I abide
 Of them for you, seeming your faults to hide;
 And on their sides their most displeasing sight,
 To see spiders and flies out of order quite.

Spiders spinning in windows well-nigh in their
 faces

Spitefully have spun, and flies innumerably
 To blow their meat have made their common
 traces;

Thus lack of order on your two sides prove I
 To have brought all sides to live unpleasantly,
 To my master's and mistress's grief, greatly
 grown [own.
 Whose which grief to me is more than mine

By whose appointment under them as now,
 I (having here the cure), must have the care
 To assign redress, for which I sent for you,
 To you and to all yours in you, to declare
 Order, to ease all spiders and flies that are,
 And all other such as have been annoyed
 By lack of order which ye ere this destroyed.

That spiders and flies are the creatures of God,
 And all his creatures in their creation good,
 I know and acknowledge, or else God's forbode.
 I hate neither the spiders' nor the flies' brood;
 I love all, as behoveth maidenly mood.
 All his creatures in an order we must love,
 That orderly use themselves as doth behave.

And such as be ill, yet may we not hate
 The persons, but the ill in the persons seen.
 This learned I of a preacher that preached late:
 And of myself (I thank God) I have not been
 So much given to hate (any person I mean,
 Be they spiders, be they flies, whatever they be)
 But I can use all, as standeth with charity.

[*Rr.i.r.*

And charitably such an order to set
 To set you in rest, and the said rest thereby
 All faults in all past to forgive and forget,

That will I you all to do, and orderly
 Each one to use himself ordinarily,
 And each use other in every kind of cause,
 As th'old known well-ordered custom duly
 draws.

And that is this : ye spiders in tip of top,
 Or in top-sides of windows, cobwebs shall
 make, [crop
 Above the reach of my broom to crush or
 Any part thereof, not set like an ale stake,
 Proudly to brag yourselves and bring flies in
 brake,
 But in place to lie most high and most hidden ;
 Spiders thus placed, custom's order hath
 bidden.

Flies in the body of the window shall pass,
 Not by thousands at once, seditiously,
 But through holes of lattice or broken glass ;
 Not blowing henceforth (so saucemalapertly)
 My master's and mistress's meat, as years
 lately

They have done, but pass and repass in number
 And usage such as shall no house accumber.

This ancient order, in few words here given,
 Is all that I ask in you to be used ;
 In lack whereof, in all sorrow you are driven ;
 In use thereof, in solace you included.
 Misorder bringing you thus confused,
 Let order, by your leaving of disorder,
 Quietness on your sides and all sides forder.

[*Rr.i.v.*

By order (from misorder) you to redeem
 (From sorrows of all sorts to solace so sorted),
 Is cause of my coming, not by means extreme,

But by most mild means that may be imported
In order to set you and see you comforted
To keep order. Wherein you obeying me,
We may live in love all, each in his degree.

Each in his degree (I say) mark that point well;
Your lack of living so, ye see, marred you all.
Chiefly you spiders, usurping to excel
In governance, out of your place natural;
Which for few years past brought and kept
flies so thrall, [agree
That you (well nigh) brought flies to grant to
You as head governor general be.

In which usurpation ye offended
Nature, reason, my master, mistress, and me.
Governors, nature hath commonly bended
Over such kinds to govern as themselves be;
Beast over beasts, fowl over fowls, as we see
Man over men, and in fear and awe is then
Th'unreasonable beast to reasonable man.

Nature ye offend, in planted plain proof here,
To take rule of other kinds than your kind is;
Reason ye offend, in that ye here appear
To take upon you the use of mine office;
Me ye offend in the same, and unto this
My master and mistress ye offend, as thus,—
Head rule here is their gift by custom's discuss.

[*Rr.ii.r.*

But leave this, and take that, mine order erst
told;
Keep you your places, and let me keep mine,
As nature and custom willeth you of old,

While reason and custom do me clear incline
My master's and mistress's will to work in fine;
As I under them, and you under me,
May lovely live (I say) each in due degree.

The spiders and flies, perceiving by her stay
That she in this matter had said what she
would,

All rejoicing, one spider assigned to say,
In such manner as good manner might him
bold,

This effect in these words, to this maid he told;
At beginning of whose talk she set her eye,
And laid her ear toward him diligently.



[Rr.ii.v.
¶The twelve spiders and twelve flies, having
heard their order set by the maid, they thank-
fully receive it. And upon her commandment
to them, to put this order in ure among all
spiders and flies, they joyfully depart that com-
mandment to fulfil. Cap. 96.



[Rr.iii.r.
MOST excellent maid and mistress of ours,
Your mild and motherly precepts given
us thus
In order old, revived now at hand of yours,
HEY III. E E

Lack whereof (as ye said) the sorrows in us
Have witnessed that of them the cause in dis-
cuss; [felt,
Your words wherein told to our deeds therein
Do instruct us, with a double witness dealt.

And double or treble (yea, quadruple) cause,
With many causes more than I can now tell,
Have we to keep order as your will us draws ;
Spiders and flies have lived like as in hell,
Since new disorder did th'old order expel.
Thus our bound duty obeying your precept,
Is your pleasure, but our profit, to see kept.

Which I promise for us, and all spiders else,
To be observed as farforth as we may.
And I (quoth one fly) for all flies as he tells,
Promise for order to walk the same way,
Rejoicing all that ever we saw this day;
Praying the great God for you now and ever
In prosperous prosperity to persevere.
Well, friends (quoth the maid) to enter order
now,
Depart, and plant this in all spiders and flies;
In top of windows, spiders, exercise you,
And flies, the holes moderately exercise.
In most joyful joy, that both sorts can devise,
From thence most joyfully they all flang and
flew, [ensue.
While the maid used her will there, as doth

[Rr.iii.v.

¶The spiders and flies being now absent, the
maid sweepeth the window clean in every place,
as far as her broom and arm will stretch.
Which done, she departeth.

Cap. 97.



[Rr.iv.r.

THE spiders and flies (for the time) being
gone,
The maid swept that window clean in all places ;
In all corners that her broom might light upon

Each cobweb (with her broom) she full defaces.
No wem seen in casements, nor casement cases
Upon her clear cleansing whereof. Out went
 she,
And in came I, her workmanship there to see.



[Rr.iv.v.
¶The maid being gone, the author cometh in.
And upon his beholding the window fair and
clean swept, without any cumbrous cobwebs or
excessive flocks of flies, he departeth. Cap. 98.



[Ss.i.r.
BEHOLDING the window, seeing every
room
Clean and empty, save three flies amid that plat,
And in the top (without reach of the maid's
broom)

Corners of cobwebs unneth seen, and to that
All things in quiet case, so that I could not
Of any matter be any further winner,
I went from the window, to the board to
dinner.

FINIS.



**The conclusion with an expo=
sition of the Author touching one piece
of the latter part of this
parable.**

I HAVE, good readers, this parable here
penned,
After old beginning newly brought to end.
The thing, years more than twenty since it
begun, [done.
To the thing years more than nineteen, nothing
The fruit was green; I durst not gather it then,
For fear of rotting before riping began.
The loss (it on the fruiterer's hand lying)
Had (in that mystery) marred his occupying.
This work (among my poor works) thus hath
it passed,—
Begun with the first, and ended with the last.
At end whereof (as at beginning) I pray
All readers that read it (in all that we may)
Each one reader to scan this parable so
As our most scanning diligently may go
In speech of spiders' and flies' faults, here
shown,
To considerate weighing of faults of our own,
And them (by grace) t'amend, for concord
growing,
As spiders and flies grow to, here in showing.
But, faults and faulters, erst repented and past,
Which faults (I hope) none on himself can now
cast,
Figured here in the spider's cruelty,
Touching deeds and deaths of those that so
passed be,

Let us rather (when memory them to mind
calls),
Lament their false facts than rejoice their
foul falls;
And pray for them, as we hope they pray for us,
That they and we, by God's merciful discuss,
May (after strife together in life carnal),
Live and love together in life eternal.

[Ss.ii.r.]

And for the chief spider and fly understand,
Spider that died and fly that 'scaped at maid's
hand,
As in that figure both most charitably,
Th'one indeed dying, th'other ready to die,
So should we not only die, but also live
As God's precepts (pain of endless death) do
give.

Ye see also that this figure here implies,
For strife in windows between spiders and flies,
The plat of all the world, and people therein.
In which world which people, if all now begin,
And henceforth endeavour them during their
lives,

By counsel of those two to cut off all strives
By cutting off all cause of strife in all parties,
As they both (each in his last tale) did devise.
The first tale, in chapter fourscore and eight
here, [appear

The second, in fourscore and twelve doth
Th'advice in both turned to, it to hear and hold :
Turning their persons to ours (in those tales
told), [fruit

Then shall we first see, and after feel, what
Our right doing (against wrong) shall execute.
Which, since ye may turn and behold as a glass,
Tedious iteration thereof I let pass.

As I (for tediousness and other causes),
 Omit (to remit) the number of clauses
 To those, learned and given (in interpretation),
 More them am I, unto moralisation.
 I leave to the learned the core of this matter ;
 Howbeit (as I can) I crave leave to smatter
 In uttering my fancy, under submission,
 Touching the taking of one exposition.

[Ss.ii.v.]

In one piece hereof one sense t'interpretate,
 Of apt application to sense literate
 In this the last said part of this said figure.
 That maid, I mean, putting her office in ure,
 Sweeping down cobwebs in every border,
 That she (in that window) saw set out of order,
 Setting all flies at their lawful liberty,
 And spiders also, t'avoid all jeopardy.
 They building in windows, without her broom's
 reach, [breach)
 (Where building within it brought much of this
 Keeping themselves within their bounds, as
 they ought, [thought.
 Harm she none did them, none said, nor none
 But spiders, having past their bounds, (as they
 had), [bad,
 And flies having flown more broad than order
 Th'one too nigh her master's and mistress's eye
 showing ;
 Th'other her master's and mistress's meat
 blowing ;
 She thought it her duty, it being her charge,
 To do some execution for warning large
 Both to spiders and flies, the flocks every one,
 By executing of spiders only one.
 And, save custom of justice forced her thereto,
 Loath was she execution on him to do.

As that maid all spiders and flies showeth to
do.

And as under that maid spider died but one,
So under this maid, save one, (in effect) none.
And as that one under that one maid did die
Repentant, so this other repentantly,
Under this other maid, the death meekly took.
All sin with all sinful errors, he forsook,
Of God craving forgiveness principally,
And then of the world, and most specially
Of this maid his mistress, who (clearly) him
forgave,

As that maid did that spider, when he did crave.

[Ss.iii.v.]

And as that maid, loathly forced by just custom,
Was driven to bring that one t'execution to
come,

So this maid, save like that maid, by force
was driven,

Was with that maid (for pity) more than even;
And as that maiden's most quarrel was ad-
dict

For that spiders and flies in that window kicked
Against the will of her master and mistress,
So did this maid her chief quarrel address
To us (or to such of us) as the precept
Of her master and mistress had not kept.
And as that maid took those faults much more
to heart

In respect of her master's and mistress's part
Than for her own part (her part being not
small,

In that the redress she was charged withal),
So under her master and mistress, this maid,
Being their like instrument to see things
weighed

She weighed that with more grief to see them
 offended [pended.
 Than for aught that on her own part de-
 Her master Christ, the head master principal,
 Her mistress, mother holy church catholical.
 And as that one maid, with that one stroke of
 her broom,
 Cleansed her window clear in every room,
 Setting flies at liberty in their right rate,
 Placing spiders likewise in accustomed state,
 Pointing both parties path of direct direction
 To trace and tread in as wealth's protection;
 So this one maid, with this one stroke of her
 sword, [board,
 From long thrall thralldom hath set us clear a
 Pointing us our places (and paths) of old
 known,
 Great guides both to ghostly and worldly
 wealth grown.

[*Ss. iv. r.*

Thus far goeth this figure, and this exposition
 Between that maid and this maid, the condi-
 tion

On her part fulfilled. Whereupon let us here
 Play our parts in this part all parts to appear.
 To this maid, as spiders and flies to that maid,
 Let our banners of obedience be displayed
 Of love, the badge of rejoicing, the right root,
 And of our own wealth the right and full boot.
 Love we her, and obey we her, as we ought,
 And also our sovereign Lord Philip, to her
 brought [twain,
 By God, as God brought her to us. Which
 Conjoined one in matrimonial train,
 But one also in authority regal,
 These two thus made one both one here we call,

Which two thus one, rejoice we every one.

And these two thus one, obey we all as one

Effectually, as those spiders and flies

Figuratively that one recognise.

Beseeking God that brought them, to keep
them here [mere

In long prosperous reign, and of his mercy

So to bless us that on this blessed stock,

He bring such imps as over their faithful flock

As their progenitors do reign presently,

They (after them) may reign perpetually.

And for gift of these two thus one to us given,

To yield the Three and One thanks, as we are
driven.

And also them, conclude we this even thus :

Thank we God for them, and God and them
for us.

FINIS.

[Ss. iv. v.]

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OF GENTLENESS AND NOBILITY

A Dialogue between the Merchant, the Knight, and the Ploughman, disputing who is a very Gentleman, and who is a Nobleman, and how men should come to authority. Compiled in manner of an Interlude, with divers toys and jests added thereto to make merry pastime and disport.

[This Dialogue has been attributed to John Heywood, and as it is not otherwise accessible it is given in this collected edition of John Heywood's writings, without prejudice.]



[A.I.R.]
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A Dialogue between the Merchant, the Knight, and the Ploughman, disputing who is a very Gentleman, and who is a Nobleman, and how men should come to authority. Compiled in manner of an Interlude, with divers toys and jests added thereto to make merry pastime and disport.

The Merchant. O what a great wealth and prosperity

It is to any realm where merchants be,
Having free liberty and intercourse also
All merchandise to convey to and fro;
Which thing I have used, and the very feat
found,

And thereby gotten many a thousand pound.
Wherefore now, because of my great riches,
Throughout this land in every place doubtless
I am magnified and greatly regarded,
And for a wise and noble man esteemed.

The Knight. Master Merchant, I hear you
right well;

But now in presumption methink ye excel,
To call yourself noble in presence here.
I wis men know what your ancestors were,
And of what great stock descended ye be;

/ Your father was but a blacksmith, pardy.

Mer. Why, sir, what then? What be you,
I pray you?

Knight. Marry, I am a gentleman, I would
ye know,
And may dispend yearly five hundred mark
land,

And I am sure all that ye have in hand
Of yearly rent is not worth five marks.

Mer. But I would thou knewest, for all thy
cracks,

I am able to buy now all the land
That thou hast, and pay for it out of hand,

[*A.i.v.*
Which I have got by mine own labour and wit.

Knight. Yet art thou but a churl, and I
have a scorn

/ Thou shouldest compare with me, a gentleman
born.

Mer. Why, what callest thou a gentleman?
Tell me.

Knight. Marry, I call them gentlemen that
be

Born to great lands by inheritance,
As mine ancestors, by continuance,
Have had this five hundred years, of whom
now I

Am descended and come lineally,
Bearing the same name and arms also
That they bare this five hundred years ago.
Mine ancestors also have ever been
Lords, knights, and in great authority,
Captains in the war and governors,
And also in time of peace great rulers;
And thine were never but artificers,
As smiths, masons, carpenters, or weavers.

Mer. All that is truth, I will not deny now;
Yet I am more gentleman born than thou,
For I call him a gentleman that gently
Doth give unto other men lovingly
Such thing as he hath of his own proper;
But he that taketh aught away from another,
And doth give nothing again therefor,
Ought to be called a churl evermore.
But mine ancestors have given away
To thine ancestors such thing as they
By their labours did truly get and win;
For mine ancestors builded houses, wherein
Thine ancestors have had their dwelling-place;
Also mine ancestors have made tools
To all manner crafty men belonging,
Whereby clothes, and every other thing,
Whereof thine ancestors need have had,
With the same tools have ever been made;
So mine ancestors have given their labours
Ever to comfort and help thine ancestors.

Knight. I deny that ever th' ancestors of
thine
Did ever give to the ancestors of mine
At any time anything, except that they
Gave somewhat therefor, either ware or money.

Mer. Marry, God-a-mercy, John, for that
now;
That is even a pig of our own sow.

[*A.ii.r.*

How can lords and estates have aught in store
Except th' artificers do get it before?
For all metals be digged first by mines,
And after wrought by the artificers.
Wool, fell, and every other thing
That is necessary to man's covering;
And all other things that men use and wear,

Is alway made by the artificer.

Knight. I grant that the artificers do make it,

But because commonly they have little wit,
Gentlemen that have lands and dominion,
Of all such riches have most possession;
For reason will ever it should so be,
Wise men to have fools in captivity.

Mer. Marry, as for wit and subtle invention,

[parison;
Mine ancestors with thine may make com-
For though my father were a smith, what then?
Yet was he a marvellous quick-witted man,
And could work as well for his part
As any in this land using that art,
And devise new fashions in things that he
made,

That every man to buy his ware was glad;
And carved and graved in iron and steel
Both image and letters marvellously well,
And thereon lay gold and gild it also
Fine and pure as any goldsmith could do.
My grandfather also was a mason,
Of great wit as any in this region,
And could build a castle and tower right well,
In which some of thy kinsmen now do dwell,
Wherein appeareth right good masonry,
With images and arms wrought curiously.
My great-grandfather, lo, was a weaver,
Of woollen yarn and of other gear,
And made marvellous pleasant works to be-
Linen, diaper, silk, and cloth of gold. [hold,
All such subtle things as I have rehearsed, lo,
Mine ancestors by their wits could work and
do;

And as for thine ancestors, I know nothing

They could do by their wits worth praising,
But use, occupy, and waste evermore
Such things as mine ancestors made before.
And thou and thine ancestors having th'
occupation

Of such things wrought by the operation

Of other men oughtest not to be praised there-
for, [A.ii.v.]

But the praise ought to be given evermore
To the artificer which by his wit
It devised, and so cunningly wrought it.
Wherefore if thou say that wit and policy
Be the things pertaining to gentry,
Thine ancestors may never compare with mine,
For their acts prove them wiser than thine;
For thine did never no thing in their days
Concerning quick wit that was worthy praise.

Knight. Yes, I wis, lewd javell, I would
thou knewest it,

Mine ancestors have had more wisdom and wit
Than thine have had, and could do also
Many things that thine could never do;
For in the country at sessions and 'size
They have been elect to be justice,
And for their wit and great discretion
They have judged and done correction
Upon thine ancestors' artificers
That have made false wares and been de-
ceivers,

And helped for to maintain everything
That is to the commonwealth pertaining.
They have been also, in time of war,
Both in this land and other countries far,
Dukes and leaders of the whole army,
And by their wits and warlike policy,

Study, forecast, and diligent travel,
 Have won many a great field and battle;
 And thine ancestors that were there
 Were never able to bear shield nor spear,
 And were never but soldiers and pioneers,
 Nor never had wisdom to be rulers;
 But because mine ancestors have ever been
 Discreet and wise, they have had authority.

Mer. Nay, nay, thine ancestors came never
 all

To authority for wisdom principal;
 For though some were wise, yet some of them
 again

Had small discretion, little wit or brain;
 But because of the long continuance
 Of their great possessions by inheritance,
 By the foolish manner of the world we see
 For that cause ever they have had authority.

Knight. And I say that good reason
 agreeth to it,

For though the father have no great wit,

[A.iii.r.]

The son that is wise should never the more
 Lose his land or authority therefor;
 For he that by study, diligence, and pain
 Great lands or possessions doth attain,
 His own life is too short and too light
 For to take the fruit of his merit;
 Reason would, therefore, that, after this life,
 His heirs before strangers have prerogate use,
 And the continuance of such possessions
 Maketh noble men and gentle conditions;
 And they whose blood hath long continued,
 As gentlemen so they should be honoured.
 And so mine ancestors long time have been
 Great possessioners and in authority.

Therefore, considering my great lineage
By blood, my noble birth and parentage,
Thou art not able to compare with me,
Neither in gentleness nor in nobility.

*Here the ploughman cometh in with a
short whip in his hand, and speaketh
as followeth.*

Plough. Now, here is bibble-babble, clitter-clatter !

I heard never of so foolish a matter.

But, by God's body, to speak the truth

I am better than either of you both.

Knight. Avaunt, cankered churl ! From
whence comest thou ?

Plough. Marry, foolish peevish daw, even
from my plough.

Now say'st,—wouldest anything therewithal ?

Knight. Yea, marry, thou lewd villain and
rude rascal ;

It is for the full ill beseeming,

To perturb any gentlemen's talking.

Plough. Gentlemen ? Ye gentlemen ? Jack
herring,

Put your shoon in your bosom for wearing ;

I account myself, by God's body,

Better than you both and more worthy.

Knight. Avaunt, knave ! get thee out of the
gate,

Or I shall lay sword on thy pate.

Plough. That shall I prove, I make God
avow,

Never in better time ; have at thee now !

Et verberat eos.

Mer. Now hold thy hand, fellow, I thee
pray,

And harken what I shall to thee say.

Plough. Say, knave, say? What canst say?

Mer. Hold thy hand, I pray thee; I come not near;

I am a merchant and no man of war.

Knight. Thou are not honest, I tell thee plainly,

To make any quarrel here so suddenly,
To perturb our communication.

Plough. Here ye may see, sirs, by God's passion,

Two proud fools make a cracking,
And when it cometh to point dare do nothing.

Mer. Our coming hither and our intent
Is not to fight, but by way of argument,
Every man to show his opinion,
To see who could show the best reason
To prove himself noble and most gentleman.

Plough. By God, all the reasons since ye began
That ye have made thereof be not worth a fly.

Knight. No, sir? I pray thee, then, tell me why.

Plough. First, as touching nobleness, I say
There is neither of you both did prove or lay
Any of your acts whereby that ye
Should in reason prove you noble to be,
Or thereby deserve any manner praising;
But all the effect of your arguing
To prove your nobleness was but only
Of the deeds and acts of your ancestry,
And of the acts that your ancestors did before;
Ye are the nobler never the more.

Knight. As touching myself, I dare make comparison

Of as noble deeds as he hath any done;
For I am and have been one of the chivalry,
At the commandment of my prince ever ready,
And every time of war have been captain,
And leader of a thousand men or twain,
And with horse and harness, spear and shield,
Have jeopardied my body in every field,
The rents of my lands have spent liberally,
And kept a great house continually,
And helped to punish thieves and bribers alway,
To the great tranquillity of my country;
And you, Master Merchant, will never take
labour,

Except it be for your own profit and lucre.

Plough. Go to, go to, now, Master Merchant;

There is a reason that giveth you a taunt,
I trow, more than you can answer well.

Mer. Nay, I wis, peevish and rude Jack
javell,

I can make an answer so substantially
Whereto neither of you is able to reply.

[*A.iv.r.*

Knight. If thou canst answer my reason,

Mer. That can I well do. [do.

Plough. Then go to, fool, go to!

Mer. I say the common weal of every land
In feat of merchandise doth principally stand,
For if our commodities be uttered for naught
Into strange lands and no riches brought,
Hither therefore we should come to beggary,
And all men driven to live in misery.
Then we noble merchants that in this realm be,
What a great wealth to this land do we;
We utter our wares and buy theirs good cheap,
And bring them hither with great profit,

And pleasure daily cometh to this region
 To all manner of people that here do won.
 Furthermore, ye see well with your eyes
 That of strange lands the commodities,
 We have such need of them that be there,
 That in no wise we may them forbear,
 As oil, silk, fruits, and spices also,
 Gold, silver, iron, and other metals more;
 All drams and drugs 'longing to physic,
 Which men must needs have when they be
 sick,

Which in this realm cannot well grow,
 Our country is too cold and not hot, I know.
 Without which things we should live in misery,
 And oft-times for lack of them we should die.
 And I spend my study and labour continually,
 And cause such things to come hither daily,
 For the comfort of this land and common-
 wealth,

And to all the people great profit and
 health.

And for such noble deeds reason will then
 That I ought to be called a nobleman,
 And neither of you both that here now be
 In nobleness may accompare with me.

Plough. Now well hit! by God's body, well
 hit,

Of one that hath but little wit.

Answer me one word first, I pray thee;

What is the noblest thing that can be?

Knight. What sayest thou thereto thyself?

Let's see.

Plough. Is not the noblest thing indeed
 That of all other things hath least need?

As God, which reigneth etern in bliss,

Is not he the noblest thing that is?

Knight. Yes, marry, no man in reason can that deny.

Plough. Well, then, there is no reason thereof why, [A.iv.v.]

But because he is the thing omnipotent,
And is in himself so sufficient,
And needeth the help of no other thing
To the help of his glorious being,
But every other thing hath need of his aid.

Mer. Marry, that is very true, and well said. [most need]

Plough. And likewise that thing that hath Is the thing that is most wretched.

So sufficiency is ever nobleness,
And necessity is ever wretchedness;
And he that hath more need of that thing
For the preservation of his living
Than his fellow hath, his fellow must needs be
By this same reason more noble than he.

Knight. What then?

Plough. By the same reason it proveth, lo!
Ye be but caitiffs and wretches both two;
And by the same reason prove I shall
That I am the noblest man of us all;
For I have need of no manner of thing
That ye can do to help of my living,
For everything whereby ye do live
I nourish it and to you both do give.
I plough, I till, I stir the ground,
Whereby I make the corn to abound,
Whereof there is made both drink and bread,
With the which daily ye must needs be fed.
I nourish the cattle and fowls also,
Fish, and herbs and other things more;
Fell, hair, and wool which the beasts do bear

I nourish and preserve, which ye do wear,
 Which if ye had not, no doubt ye should
 Starve for lack of clothes because of cold.
 So both you should die, or live in necessity,
 If ye had not comfort and helpe of me.
 And as for your fine cloth and costly array,
 I cannot see why ye ought or may
 Call yourself noble because ye wear it,
 Which was made by other men's labour and
 wit;

And also your delicate drinks and viand
 By other men's labour be made so pleasant.
 Therefore, Master Merchant, now to you I say
 I cannot see but I am able and may
 Live without you or your purveyance,

[A.v.r.]

For of food and cloth I have sufficiency
 Of myself for living necessary.
 And now, Sir Knight, to you I say plainly,
 I see not that ye can anything do
 For the common weal, or ought 'longing
 thereto;

But each man, being in authority,
 Having wit may do it as well as ye.
 Therefore to speak now of necessity,
 There is neither of you both, but ye be
 In more need than I; therefore I say plain
 I am more noble than either of you twain.

[Mer.] Now that is a foolish reason, so God
 me save,

For by the same reason thou wouldest have
 Every beast, fish, and other fowl then
 To be more noble of birth than a man.
 For man hath more need of bodily covering
 Than they have, for they need nothing;
 The beasts have hair, and also a thick skin,

The fish scales or shells to keep their bodies in,
The fowls feathers, and so everything
By nature hath his proper covering,
Save man himself, which is born all naked,
And therefore he should be then most wretched.

Plough. Marry, no man can make a better
reason,

For that is a sure and true conclusion ;
For if a child when he is first born
Were not helped and covered, he were soon
lorn ;

He hath no strength to help him never a dell,
Yet beasts have power to help themselves well.
So, considering man's body in deed,
A beast is more noble and man more wretched,
Because he hath need of many more things
Than beasts have to help of their livings.
Also, man must daily labour and sweat
To get him full sustenance, as drink and meat,
The ground he must dig and the beasts kill
For bread and meat his body to fill,
Grapes, fruits, and herbs nourish diligently
To make good drinks to refresh his body.
But all brute beasts have covering natural
Sufficient to cover their bodies withal,
And find their food ever on the ground ready,
Without any pain, labour, or study.

[A.v.v.

So every man, by reason of his body,
Is more wretched and in more misery
Than beasts be. Yet this notwithstanding,
Man is most noble of creatures living,
Not by his body, for that is impotent,
But by his soul being so excellent ;
For by reason of his soul intellectual
He subdueth all other beasts alive,

And compelleth all other beasts that be
 By his wit to relieve his necessity.
 But beasts have no wit themselves to defend,
 Nor can get no more than God hath them send.
 For take any beast that weareth hair,
 And do clip it off bare against winter;
 That beast hath no manner of policy
 To get other covering for his body
 Of cloth nor skins, nor hath no wit
 To put it upon him though one have made it,
 Nor can build no house nor kindle no fire
 To warm his body if need should require.
 But yet a man hath wit and understanding
 For to help himself in every such thing;
 So man for his soul intellectual
 Is most noble creature of beasts all.

Mer. That is a very good and pregnant
 reason.

Yet methinketh thou makest a digression
 From the argument that we first began,
 Which was to prove who was most gentleman,
 Which we disputed; I would thou haddest
 heard it. [whit.

Plough. Tush! I heard what ye said every
Knight. Then shew thy reason therein ere
 thou go.

Plough. Nay, by God, I have somewhat
 else to do.

I must go buy me a ha'porth of grease
 The spokes of my cart therewith to dress.
 Trow ye that I will leave my business
 For your babbling pomp and foolishness?
 Nay, by St. Mary, I will not do so,
 For I can now to the market go
 And for an halfpenny as much grease buy
 As shall cost me in our town a penny;

And I tell thee plainly, without any boast,
A halfpenny is as well saved as lost.

Mer. Straw for an halfpenny ! therein is no
waste ;
Tarry with us awhile ; perhaps thou mayest

[*A.vi.r.*
By our acquaintance now here get more
Than thou gattest with thy cart this month
before.

Plough. Straw for thy counsel ! turd a fart !
Trowest I will give up my plough or cart
And follow thy foolish appetite and mind ?
Nay, I am not yet so mad nor so blind !
For when I am at my cart or plough
I am more merrier than either of you.
I would not change my life nor my living
For to be made a great lord or a king.
There is no joy nor pleasure in this world here
But hyll belly fill and make good cheer,
Be it prince, lord, gentleman, or knave,
It is all the joy that here he can have.
But these covetous and ambitious wretches,
They set their minds in honour and riches
So much that they be never content,
So they live ever in pain and torment.
But a man that can this means find
To have food and cloth and a merry mind,
And to desire no more than is needful,
That is in this world the life most joyful,
Which life in this world no man shall acquire
Till he subdue his insatiable desire.

Mer. I see well thou hast a cursed apish
wit.

Then if thou wilt depart, I pray thee yet
Come again when thy business is done.

Plough. For what intent, now, should I do so? [proceed,

Mer. For we will in our old argument Who should be called a gentleman indeed, And we would be glad to hear thy reason.

Plough. I will come again upon a condition, That ye will wait upon me both twain, And be not out of the way when I come again.

Knight. We will not be far hence.

Plough. Then I will not fail. [quail.

Mer. Then I pray thee let not thy promise

Plough. Lo, here is my finger; now trust me well,

I will come again if I have my hele;

For, by God, I promise you one thing—

I am as true of my word as the king.

But if I find you not here, then by my troth

I shall call you openly false knaves both.

Mer. Thou shalt find us true in everything.

Plough. I think so; except lying and stealing. [A.vi.v.

Knight. Then farewell for a season; adieu!—

[*Plough.*] Then fare ye well both, I dare say as true

As some that be tied in Newgate.

Mer. Well, now he is gone, God speed well his gate;

But what shall we do now the mean season?

Knight. Let us take now some recreation, And come again here and keep our 'pointment.

Mer. Now thereto I am right well content, And in the meanwhile, good Lord of thy Grace Preserve all the people here in this place.

Amen.

Finis Primæ Partis.

SECUNDA PARS.

The Ploughman. Here may I walk and
wander to and fro,

But I see not them which I would speak to.

Mer. Yes, by rood, here we be both twain
To whom thou didst promise to meet here
again

To dispute the question that we began,

Which of us could prove him most gentleman.

Knight. Thou saidest thou heardest our
arguments all.

Plough. So did I, neither good nor sub-
stantial,

For thy foolish and peevish opinion

Was, because of the great dominion

Of the lands and rents whereto thou wast born,

Which thine ancestors had long time before,

Thou thinkest thyself a gentleman to be.

And that is a foolish reason seemeth me,

For when Adam delved and Eve span,

Who was then a gentleman?

But then came the churl and gatherèd good,

And there began first the gentle blood;

And I think verily ye do believe

That we came all of Adam and Eve.

Then to speak by reason; great possessions

Make no gentleman, but gentle conditions.

That is the cause and the best reason why

One should be called a gentleman truly.

And furthermore mark well this reason then,—

If a man's ancestors have been gentlemen,

And virtuous and good to common weal,

That ought to be reported never adell

To the praise of the child which doth refuse

HEY. III.

G G

[B.i.r.]

Such good conditions and the contrary use;
 But he ought to be dispraised the more
 Because his ancestors have showed him be-
 fore

A precedent of gentleness and virtue,
 Which good example he doth not ensue,
 For the gentleness of his blood cle[a]r[l]y
 In him doth decay and utterly die;
 So he that useth conditions virtuous,
 Though that his ancestors were vicious,
 Ought not to be dispraised therefor,
 But ought to be honoured and praised the
 more.

Knight. Yet methinketh more honour
 should be given

To him which is of noble blood and kin.

Plough. Then if thou wilt look honoured to
 be

Because of thy blood, then mark well and see
 The vilest beggar that goeth by the door.
 Had ye not both one God and creator?
 Ye came of one first stock and progeny,
 Both of Adam and Eve, ye will not deny;
 The beggar and thou were both, doubtless,
 Conceived and born in filth and uncleanness.
 Thy blood and the beggar's of one colour be,
 Thou art as apt to take sickness as he;
 If thou be in the body wounded
 Thy flesh is as ill as his to be healed.

Alas! I have known many or this
 So proud of their birth that all their lives
 Would give them to no labour nor learning,
 Which brought them to miserable ending,
 That in poverty wretchedly did die, [high.
 Or fallen to theft and hanged therefor full

So I say virtue and good conditions, then,
Is that which maketh the very gentleman;
And though the father may bequeath to the
son

His riches, his land, and his possession,
Yet may he neither give nor bequeath
Unto him in no wise after his death
His virtue nor his gentle conditions.
They cannot descend as other possessions,
And if thou wilt be a gentleman, needs
Thou must then use virtue and gentle deeds.

Knight. Why desire men, then, praise
evermore

Of the acts of their ancestors done before?

Plough. One cause thereof is for lack of
learning; [B.i.v.]

They perceive not the reason of the thing.
Another is because there be many,
That call themselves gentlemen, unworthy,
Which live voluptuously and bestial,
And do no good in the world at all,
But live in pride, sloth, and unthriftiness;
And because they have no manner goodness,
Nor property nor virtue in them whereby
Any man should think them any praiseworthy,
Therefore they seek for commendation
Of the acts that their ancestors have done.

Mer. Then I marvel men desire to be
called

Of the blood of them that excelled
In worldly honour, as kings and emperors,
Where some were tyrants, some were conquerors,
And few desire to be called of their blood
Which have been called just men, virtuous and
good,

And used indifferent justice and equity,
 Meekness, abstinence, or wilful poverty.

Plough. If I should tell thee the very cause
 true,

It is because they love no such virtue,
 Which virtue and gentle conditions should be
 'Longing to gentlemen of property.

Knight. If gentle conditions be the cause,
 lo,

Then will I compare with both you two;
 For I have ever used gentle manner,
 And so have mine ancestors that before were.
 For first of all, when this world began,
 Long after there were but few people then,
 Men had sufficient of everything,
 Without great labour, for food and clothing;
 All thing was in common among them, doubt-
 less;

But afterward, when people did increase,
 Each man, to increase his pleasure and
 volute,

Of goods and lands desired property,
 Whereof great strife and debate did arise.
 Then such as mine ancestors were that were
 wise

Did study to make laws how the people might
 be

Living together in peace and unity,
 And against enemies alway defended
 The people that tilled the ground and laboured.
 The people, perceiving then their goodness,
 Their great wit, discretion, and gentleness,
 Were content to give them part of the profit

[*B.ii.r.*

Coming of their lands, which they did get,
 As cora, cattle, and such things as they won.

But after, when that coin of money began,
They changed those revenues, and were content

To give them in money an annual rent.
So for their good and virtuous conditions
They came first to lands and possessions;
So possessions began, and were first found
Upon a good and reasonable ground.

Plough. By Gogg's sweet body, thou liest
falsely;

All possessions began first of tyranny.
For when people began first to increase,
Some gave themselves all to idleness,
And would not labour, but take by violence
That other men gat by labour and diligence.
Then they that laboured were fain to give
Them part of their gettings in peace to live,
Or else for their lands, money a portion;
So possession begun by extortion,
And when such extortioners had oppressed
The labouring people, then they ordained,
And made laws marvellous strait and hard,
That their heirs might enjoy it afterward.
So the law of inheritance was first begun,
Which is a thing against all good reason
That any inheritance in the world should be.

Knight. That is a shameful opinion, seem-
eth me,

For when I have laboured and by great study
Got and purchased lands truly,
It is good reason that I have liberty
To give those lands to whom it liketh me,
Or else to let them descend lineally
To my child or cousin of my blood most nigh.
For inheritance must needs be a good thing,
Because so much good thereof is proceeding.

Every man to his blood such love doth bear,
 Because the land shall descend to his heir,
 He will build thereon, and the land improve,
 And make corn and grass to increase and grow,
 Graft fruit, set trees, and nourish timber,
 And to increase fish, make ponds with water,
 Stock bushes, weed weeds which destroy herb-
 age,

And all barren ground bring to tillage,
 And amend the highways that be there about,

[B.ii.v.]

And do many other good deeds, no doubt,
 For the profit of his heirs that shall be,
 And for the common wealth of his country,
 Which things surely he would never intend
 If the land should not to his heir descend.

Plough. By thy reason no other thing is
 meant

But a good deed upon an evil intent;
 When men for love or pride do such good deeds
 The devil therefor shall quit them their
 meeds.

Knight. Whether God or the devil quit
 them therefor

Is now to our purpose never the more,
 For their minds and intents no man can tell.
 But touching inheritance, this I wot well,
 Much good cometh thereof and daily doth
 grow.

Plough. Nay, much ill cometh thereof, I
 shall prove how,

For these men that be of great possessions
 Unto their blood have such affections,
 If any land like them that lieth nigh them
 Of their poor neighbours, they will destroy
 them,

Or by extort means they will them compel
The land for half the money worth to sell.
And when they take money they will alway
Ever borrow and never willing to pay;
And when they shall die ye see the experience,
Few of them have remorse of conscience
To make any manner of restitution
Of any land so wrongfully gotten.

Knight. Thou hast spoke sore against
gentlemen;

But what sayest thou of merchants, then?

Plough. Many be good and worshipful also,
And many charitable deeds they do,
Build churches, and amend the highways,
Make almshouses and help many decays;
But some be covetous and full falsely
Get their goods by deceit and usury,
And when they have a thousand pounds in their
coffers

They will rather suffer their neighbours
To starve for hunger and cold and to die
Or they will give to help them a penny;
And yet moreover when any of them be
Promoted to rule or authority,
They disdain all learning, law, and reason,
And judge all by will and affection.

Mer. Thou art but a railer to speak so sore
[*B.iii.r.*]

Against gentlemen and merchants evermore.
Be not ploughmen and others that drive the
cart,

And such rustical fellows as thou art,
False shrews, and live as viciously also
As gentlemen of lands and merchants do?

Knight. Yes, these villain carters, almost
each one

Have neither conscience nor devotion,
 For bribe and steal and everything they will
 If they may secretly come thereuntil;
 And as for prayer and divine service,
 They love them in no manner wise,
 Nor never wolde labour nor work do
 If need of living drove them not thereto.

Plough. Yet gentlemen and the rich merchants that be

Use much more vice and iniquity.

Mer. Why thinkest thou all merchants and gentlemen nought? [thought;

Plough. Nay, I say not so; that is not my
 I am not yet so foolish or so mad,
 For I know many good, though some be bad;
 Yet some will suffer his debts unpaid to be,
 And die and jeopard his soul rather than he
 Will any of his lands minish and impair
 That should after his death come to his heir;
 And some of them so proud be of their blood,
 And use small virtue and do little good,
 But give all their minds and their study
 To oppress the poor people by tyranny;
 And some of them think this for a surety
 Is the most honour to them that can be,
 To be able for to do extortion
 And to maintain it without.

Knight. By Gog's sweet body, thou art a stark knave,
 Noblemen and gentlemen thus to deprave.

Plough. What, thou proud whoreson fool,
 whom dost thou knave?

I trow thou wouldest a good blow or two have
 With a good whipstock, to teach thee courtesy.

Knight. Avaunt, beggarly knave, I thee defy!

Plough. What! will thou wage battle by
and by now?

That shall I prove straight, I make God avow.

Et hic verberat eos.

Mer. Keep the peace, masters! hold your
hands, for shame!

To make this business ye be greatly to blame;
Ye will disturb all this whole company.

Plough. Nay, marry, it is a cause to make
them merry; [B.iii.v.

To walk such a proud fool is but sport and
game.

Knight. By cock's body, were not for worldly
shame [blood.

I should cut thy flesh, or else see thy heart's

Mer. Sir, hold your tongue; your words be
nothing good;

We lose here, with this lewd altercation,

Much good pastime and recreation.

Plough. Why, what better pastime here
canst thou have

Than to hear one to call another knave,

And see such a proud fool walked with a whip?

Mer. But I love it not; therefore of fellow-
ship

Leave this brabbling and with good argument
Try the matter that is most convenient.

Plough. Nay, I will try it howsoever he will;

Be it with words or deeds, I will answer him
still;

For by God, if he will not be content

To be concluded by good argument,

I will conclude him one way or that I go,

Or I shall prove it on his pate, that shall I do.

Knight. Thou speakest like a clerk that hath
little wit;

When a case is put if he cannot soil it
 By no manner reason that he can lay,
 Then will he answer him this wise and say,
 "Beware what ye say, sir; now I advise you;
 For it is treason or heresy to speak now,"
 To the intent to rebuke him openly
 Before the unlearned people that stand thereby;
 And if he can no colour of such thing find,
 Then will he vex and chafe in his mind,
 And cast out some lewd words of quarrelling
 To turn the whole matter to chiding and fighting;

And so dost thou now, like one that were mad.

Plough. Nay, I would thou knewest, thou
 foolish lad,

I am neither mad nor drunken yet;
 For my opinion, I have well proved it
 By substantial reason and argument
 That inheritance is not convenient,
 And showed better reasons than thou canst do.

Knight. Nay, thy reasons may soon be answered unto;

For God defend that estates of inheritance
 Should be destroyed, for by that good ordinance

Gentlemen of lands undoubtedly
 Bring up their children full honourably;
 Some put to the school to learn cunning,
 To instruct the people in virtuous living;

[*B.iv.r.*]

Some made to be active in martial deeds,
 Able to defend the land when need is;
 And the rustical people that have no land
 Such things be not able to take in hand.
 Wherefore if we should destroy inheritance
 We should destroy all good rule and ordinance.

Plough. But such men as have great rents
and lands,
And no estate but term of their lives,
And everything thereon will nourish and save
For the great zeal and love that they only have
To the common wealth of their country;
And for God's sake, lo! these people be they
That be worthy to have possessions,
And such people of virtuous conditions,
And no other, should be chosen governors,
And they should have lands to maintain their
honours,

Term of their lives as long as they take pain,
For the common wealth this is good reason
plain.

So that no man ought to have any land
But such as be apt and have charge in hand
For the common wealth, as princes and rulers,
Bishops, curates, preachers, and teachers,
Judges, ministers, and other officers
That of the commonwealth be executors,
And valiant men of the chivalry
That be bound to defend the people daily,
Such men as be apt to all such things
Should have lands to maintain their livings.
So inheritance is not beseeming
To let them have lands that can do no such
thing;

Nor I think it not reasonable neither
One man to live by labour of another,
For each man is born to labour truly,
As a bird is born to fly naturally.
Nor a man ought not to have such liberty
To leave lands to his child whereby that he
Shall lust for to live in sloth and gluttony,
Compelled to do nought but live voluptuously.

Mer. There is always good remedy for that,
That is, to compel them to do somewhat,
So that each man having inheritance
Have some authority and governance,
Wherein he should take pain and business,
To constrain him to eschew idleness.

[*B.iv.v.*

Plough. Then this great mischief should
follow of it,
Ofttimes they should rule that have little wit,
Or disposed to be proud and covetous,
Or to live after their lusts voluptuous;
Which if such men had authority
Many things no doubt misordered should be.
Where justice should be, there would be
tyranny;

Where peace should be, war, debate, and envy.
So there is no good reason that I can see
To prove that any inheritance should be.

Knight. Yes, that shall I prove by good au-
thority, [see
For read in the Bible, and thou shall therein
God said to Abraham, "*Tibi dabo*
Terram hanc et semine tuo."

Which is as much as to say, to expound it
true,

I shall give this land to thee and thine issue.
Here is a good proof that it was God's will
That Abraham and his blood should continue
still

As possessioners, and have the governance
Of that land as their proper inheritance.

Plough. Thou answerest me now even like
a fool,

As some of these fond clerks that go to school;
When one putteth to them a subtle question

Of philosophy to be proved by reason,
When they have all their wits, and reason spend,
And cannot tell how their part to defend,
Then they will allege some authority
Of the laws or else of divinity,
Which in no wise men may deny.
And yet ye know well that of philosophy
The principles oft contrariant be
Unto the very ground of divinity;
For the philosophers agree hereunto
Quod mundus fuit semper ab eterno,
And divines *Quod in principio omnium*
Creavit Deus terram et cælum.
But thou didst promise openly even now
Only by natural reason to prove how
That inheritance ought for to be had.

Mer. By Gog's body, sirs, I hold you both
mad!

Ye be like some women that I know well.
When they would any matter unto a man tell,
They will tell twenty tales by the way,
Nothing to purpose to the matter that they
[C.i.r.

Did first intend to tell and declare;
And in like manner now both ye do fare.
For ye dispute now whether inheritance
Be a reasonable thing or a good ordinance,
Which is a matter nothing pertaining
To the question moved at the beginning;
For the question was which of us all three
Could prove himself most gentleman to be.

Knight. As touching that we have all spoke
and said

Each man for his part as much as can be laid.

Plough. Nay, I have yet reasons left where-
by I can

Prove myself of us all most gentleman,
That neither of you both can void by reason.

Mer. If thou have ought else to say, now
speak on.

Plough. Then to you both; answer me this
short clause,—

Is not gentle conditions the most principal
cause

To make one to be a gentleman?

Knight. Peradventure it may be so; what
then?

Plough. Peradventure, quotha?

Nay, I shall prove that by examples many one;
For music maketh one a musician,
Grammar to be a good grammarian,
And also geometry a good geometrician,
And churlish conditions a churl for to be,
And so of every other state and degree;
And where gentle conditions be, doubtless
In any person there is gentleness.
Then as virtue maketh a good man,
So gentle conditions a gentleman.

Mer. All those points I think must needs
granted be;

What arguest more thereof forth let us see.

Plough. How sayest then to pride, wrath,
and envy?

Knight. They be nought and evil, I think
verily.

Plough. What is meekness, patience, and
charity?

Knight. Every one a gentle and good pro-
perty.

Plough. What is covetise and liberality?

Knight. The first good, the other nought—
for surety.

Plough. What is gluttony, sloth, and lechery?

Knight. They be nought all; who can that deny?

Plough. What abstinence, good business, and chastity?

Knight. Virtuous and gentle properties they be.

Plough. Since ye have granted this, I shall prove plain

I am a gentleman; so is none of you twain.

First, for pride your raiment showeth what ye be;

[*C.i.v.*]

For ye will never be content except that ye

Have the finest cloth and silk for to wear

Of orient colours, and all your gear

So costly, your houses gilt gloriously,

As though ye would therein yourselves deify.

Ye covet evermore goods, lands, and rent;

Whatsoever ye get, yet never content;

Wrathful, ye be moved to anger anon,

And envious, disdaining every man.

And as for me, I am content alway

With a poor cottage and simple array;

I disdain no man, and yet patiently

Can suffer to be called knave, and not angry.

Sometime I call him knave again in haste,

And when I have said, my anger is past.

Ye have your beds so pleasant and soft,

Wherein ye ease yourselves too long and too oft,

Which maketh your bodies so tender to be

That ye cannot endure labour like me.

With no manner of coarse food ye will be fed,

But with pleasant wines and most whitest
bread,
With flesh and fish most delicate and fat,
All fruits and spices that can be gat;
And when ye have had such pleasant refections,
To assuage your carnal insurrections,
Whatsoever she be, wife, widow, or maid,
If she come in the way, she shall be essayed.

Mer. Thou liest, slanderous churl, for I
think of troth

Thou usest such vice more than we both.

Plough. Nay, by Cock's body, I use no such
life,

For I am content with black Maud, my wife;
Trow ye that I care for these nice proud [prinns],
These painted popagays that hold up their
chins,

And look so smoterly as who say they would
Have every man woo them that doth them be-
hold?

Tut, man! for all such venereal work

As good is the foul as the fair in the dark.

Knight. Thou sayest true; draff is good
enough for swine.

Plough. Yet thou answerest to no reason
of mine.

Knight. Thy reasons all right well answer
I can,

For I say it becometh a noble man

To have rich apparel and clothing,

And goodly houses of costly building,

And that each man, according to his degree,

[*C.ii.r.*

Be known from other and what they be.

For if such costly things were not made,

Work for poor people could never be had,

And many folks then should fail to idleness,
Which is the mother of vice and wretchedness.

Plough. Yea, but I delight no such vanities
worldly,

I delight neither in sloth nor gluttony;
I dig and delve; I labour for my living,
Never idle, but somewhat ever doing;
Daily I run and go bare, sweat and swink;
I eat brown bread and drink small drink,
Content with coarse meat, whatsoever it be,
So it quench the hunger, it sufficeth me.
These points I use, which I have rehearsed
now,

Be not these gentle conditions, I pray you?

Mer. If thou use them, need compelleth thee
thereto, [wise do.

For if thou couldest, hardly thou would other-

Plough. What I would do then ye cannot
tell.

It is not to purpose, but this I wot well;
Since that I use my life in such good manner,
With such gentle conditions expressed here,
More than ye both do still continuing;
And since that gentle conditions is the thing
To make a gentleman the cause principal,
Wherein I use my life most of us all,
Who can by any reason deny, then,
But that I am of us all most gentleman?

Knight. In faith, if thou be gentleman there-
for,

Thou art a gentleman against thy will, full sure.

Mer. Since I see he standeth in his own con-
ceit so well,

That opinion we shall never expel
From him by no argument or reason;
Therefore now for a little season

Let us depart from him; I hold it best;
Then we shall have with him some rest.

Knight. I agree thereto, for Caton sayeth
this,—

Contra verbosas noli contendere verbis;

Contend nor argue never in no matter

With him that is full of words and clatter.

Mer. Therefore a season let us both depart.

Knight. I am agreed thereto with all mine
heart.

Plough. Why, sirs, then will ye depart and
begone? [season,

Mer. Yea, that we will; farewell for a
For to tarry here longer we see no great cause.

[*Et exeunt.*

[*C.ii.v.*

Plough. Then fare ye well, as wise as two
daws, [twain

And I pray God send you such grace both
To be stark cuckolds or ye come again.

Now, masters [*the ploughman addresses him-
self to the audience*], they be both gone
away,

Therefore one word; now hark what I say.

We see well now by plain experience,

When a man is set in a wilful credence

All to fortify his own opinion,

If God himself then would with him reason,

In effect it shall no more avail

Than with a whip to drive a snail.

Therefore no remedy is that I can see

For evil men that be in authority,

But let them alone till God will send

A time till our governors may intend

Of all enormities the reformation,

And bring in their hands the rod of correction,

Directed to the

And the reforming of injuries themselves see,
And will say precisely, Thus it shall be.
For exhortations, teaching, and preaching,
Jesting and railing, they mend no thing,
For the amendment of the world is not in me,
Nor all the great arguments that we three
Have made since we reasoned here together
Do not prevail the weight of a feather
For the helping of anything that is amiss.
We cannot help it then, since it so is.
I will let the world wag, and home I will go,
And drive the plough as I was wont to do,
And pray God send us peace. I will no far mell;
Therefore, masters all, now fare ye well.

Hic Miles et Mercator iterum entrant.

Knight. Now, by my troth, I am glad that
he is gone,

Mer. And so am I, by sweet St. John.
I heard not a churl this seven year
Show such curst reasons as he hath done here
For the maintenance of his opinion.
Yet he is deceived for all his reason;
For it is necessary that rulers be,
To have possessions to maintain their degree,
And those few to drive the multitude all
Of the other people to labour to fall;
For if the rulers drove them not thereto,
The people would be idle and nothing do.

[*C.iii.r.*

[*Knight.*] And most reason is that govern-
ance

Should come to such rulers by inheritance,
Rather than to have them choose by election,
Ofttimes by dread, meed, and affection
Men of evil conscience that great tyrants be;
Read old chronicles, the proof ye shall see.

And though they have great wit and learning,
 Yet so proud they be thereof they fear nothing,
 Neither God nor man, but evermore still
 Without counsel or advice follow their own
 will.

But they that by inheritance rulers be,
 Though they have no great learning, yet we see
 Yet maketh them more fearful and better content

To follow wise men's counsel and advisement;
 And since that it hath been so long continued
 Inheritors to have rule and so long used,
 And that they have ruled by as discretion
 As the other that have been chosen by election,
 If that order of rule by succession of blood
 Should be destroyed, it should do hurt and no
 good. [debar;

Mer. That reason is so great no man can
 Nevertheless that churlish knave, that carter,
 After his fond opinion thinketh thus
 Himself more gentleman than us.

Knight. And therein he lieth, for by experience we see

That gentle conditions most commonly be
 In them that be of noble blood born [before
 For take twenty carters, which never were
 Acquainted, let them be together; [manner;
 Take twenty strange gentlemen in like
 These churlish carters, I dare well say,
 Will not agree together scant one day
 Without chiding, quarrelling, or fighting;
 Each one will steal from other, and be picking,
 And strive which of them at the scot shall pay
 least, [best.
 And endeavour them who can play the knave
 But these gentlemen, I warrant you, will study

Who can show to other most courtesy,
And of their gentleness will prefer to pay
For the other, and show what pleasures they
may.

So touching gentleness I say surely
Men of great birth use it most commonly.

Mer. There can be no truer saying nor
sentence,
And the cause thereof we see by experience;

[C.iii.v.
For these poor wretches that have nothing,
Must be niggards, churlish, and sparing.
But gentlemen be taught to be liberal,
And so they may be, for they have the where-
withal.

Knight. And as touching nobleness, that
argument [dent

Which the ploughman made late proveth evi-
That gentlemen born to land must needs be
For sufficiency of most nobility.

For beside God's gifts of grace and of nature,
As wit and bodily strength, yet they be sure
Of other riches, as of land and rent,
To avoid need, so they be more sufficient
Of themselves than other poor people doubtless,
Than if need to strange help cause wretched-
ness

And suffiance because wretchedness.

Mer. A better reason no man can devise;

And yet farther I think likewise
He that hath great abundance of riches
May use liberality and gentleness;

And also it is ever necessary

That some live in wealth and some in misery;
And let churls babble and say what they will,
It hath been so ever and will be so still.

For it is Almighty God's purveyance
 Wise men of fools to have the governance;
 And they that rule well I beseech Jesu,
 Send them good life and long to continue.

Amen.

THE PHILOSOPHER.

Ye sovereigns all discreet and excellent,
 Before whom this dialogue showed hath been,
 Touching three points by way of argument,
 First, what is gentleness and what nobility,
 And who should be chose to high authority.
 These questions they be so high and subtle
 Few dare presume to define them well.

[C. iv. r.]

Yet I think now, under your corrections,
 The thing that maketh a gentleman to be
 Is but virtue and gentle conditions,
 Which as well in poor men oftentimes we see
 As in men of great birth or high degree;
 And also vicious and churlish conditions
 May be in men born to great possessions.
 And further, as touching nobility,
 Yet standeth much part I think doubtless
 In sufficiency reason doth agree;
 But that suffisance making nobleness
 Must needs be annexèd unto goodness;
 For suffisance is not the cause principal
 That God is noble, but his goodness
 withal.

So virtue is ever the thing principal
 That gentleness and nobleness doth ensue;
 Then these head rulers and governors all
 Should come thereto because of their virtue,

And in authority they ought not continue,
Except they be good men, discreet and wise,
And have a love and zeal unto justice.
Wherefore, sovereigns, all that here present be,
Now mark well these reasons here brought in
Both against men of high and of low degree,
For this intent only, to rebuke sin;
For the best way that is for one to begin,
To convert the people by exhortation
Is to persuade them by natural reason.
For when that a man by his own reason
Judgeth himself for to offend,
That grudgeth his conscience and giveth
compunction
Into his heart to cause him amend,
But such blind beasts that will not intend
To hear no good counsel nor reason
Ought by the law to have sharp correction.
But then if the laws be not sufficient,
Which have been made and ordained before,
To give therefor condign punishment,
The princes and governors be bound ever-
more
To cause new laws to be made therefor,
And to put such men in authority
That good men just and indifferent be.
But because that men of nature evermore
Be frail and following sensuality,

[C. iv. v.]

It is impossible in a manner therefore
For any governors that be in authority
At all times just and indifferent to be,
[E]xcept they be bridled and thereto com-
pellèd
By some strait laws for them devisèd.
As thus, that no man such room occupy

But certain years and then to be removed,
Yet that while bound to attend diligently,
And if he offend and surely proved,
Without any favour that he be punishèd;
For the punishment of a judge or officer
Doth more good than of thousand other.
And until that such orders be devised
Substantially, and put in execution,
Look never to see the world amended,
Nor of the great mischiefs the reformation;
But they that be bound to see the things
done
I pray God of his grace to put in their
mindys
To reform shortly such things amiss.
And though that I myself now percase
Thus mine opinion have publishèd,
Or any of my fellows here in this place
In any point here have us abusèd,
We beseech you to hold us excusèd;
And so the author hereof requireth you all,
And thus I commit you to God eternal.

AMEN.

John Rastell me fieri fecit
Cum privilegio regali.

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